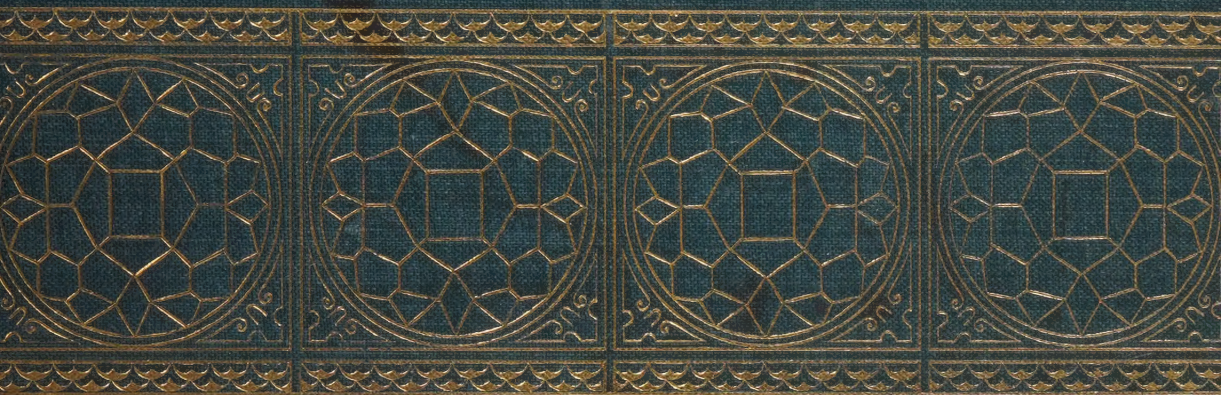


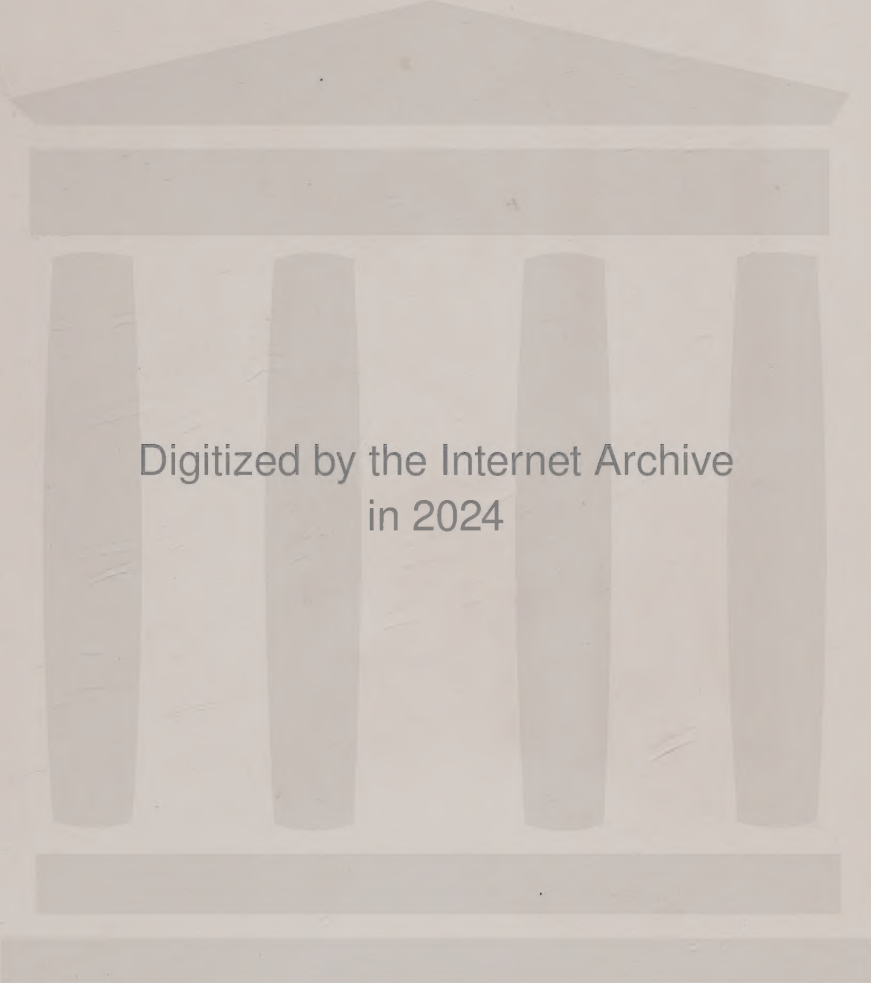
· RUY BLAS ·

VICTOR HUGO



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RU Y BLAS.



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ÉDITION DE LUXE

RUY BLAS

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

BY

VICTOR HUGO

ILLUSTRATED WITH NUMEROUS COMPOSITIONS BY ADRIEN
MOREAU, ETCHED BY CHAMPOLLION



BOSTON

ESTES AND LAURIAT

1894

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ÉDITION DE LUXE.

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University Press:

JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

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1884

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

RUY BLAS, by Victor Hugo, is unquestionably one of the finest of modern French dramas, both as regards its construction, the noble vein of true poetry that pervades it, and its powerful development of character.

What can be more admirable than the inimitable Don Cæsar de Bazan, — the eccentric ragamuffin, the irrepressible ne'er-do-weel, equal to cut a purse or to perpetrate any extravagance, and who, at the same time, would sooner die than commit a base action, — who literally, in the end, sacrifices himself in his efforts to discover a nefarious plot his own relative is preparing wherewith to entrap the Queen? This creation alone is sufficient to stamp the play with the seal of excellence; but Don Cæsar de Bazan is not the only character that calls for special notice.

In Don Sallust we have the cold, calculating, and unscrupulous politician, — a man who, to serve his own purposes, hesitates not, for one moment, to carry out his intentions, even though they involve him in the perpetration of actual crime. This character, although terrible, is not unduly strained or overdrawn, as more than one example has proved to the world. It is not only an art study, depraved though it is, but also one of nature.

In Ruy Blas we have one of those chivalrous natures, who, full of enthusiasm for all that is great and good, are yet led to commit errors in spite of themselves, by a more subtle and powerful will than their own.

12000

In Donna Maria de Neubourg we have the suffering and neglected woman, who, from untoward circumstances, is led into a snare that proves, in the end, her downfall. From the first she enlists our sympathy; and finally awakens our pity, because, in yielding to a natural impulse in her trying and cruel position, her misfortunes fall upon her undeserved.

Don Guritan, although a mere sketch, is a most amusing and distinctive character. In him we have the vain-glorious martinet and fop, who brings upon his own head the punishment of his egregious vanity and folly.

I have endeavoured to make this translation as nearly literal as the idiomatic construction of the two languages will permit. There are some words, and indeed phrases, that are untranslatable; and, where these occur, which is comparatively seldom, I have *imitated* them as nearly as possible, so as not to injure the distinctive character of the work. There are also passages that read well, and even finely in the French language, which, were they literally translated, would be apt to raise a smile where no such effect was intended; take, for example, the concluding lines of the great speech made by Ruy Blas to the Ministers in the third act. He says:—

“Et l'aigle imperial, qui, jadis, sous ta loi
Couvrait le monde entier de tonnerre et de flamme
Cuit, pauvre oiseau plumé, dans leur marmite infame !”

Now, as “marmite” is literally a pot or caldron, the idea of a plucked eagle being boiled therein is too ludicrous. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of slightly altering the original, without, I trust, robbing the grand climax of its power.

In conclusion, I will only add that I have adopted the twelve syllable metre of rhyming verse, because it is the nearest approach possible to the great original, and carries

out the design I had from the first, namely: to render into English the *form*, as well as, if possible, the *spirit* of the great French drama. If I have succeeded, therefore, in part only, I shall be amply compensated; and should this work find favour with the reading public, and awaken a still deeper interest than already exists in the poetical dramas of this great Author, my labour will not have been in vain.

W. D. S. A.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

RUY BLAS.
DON SALLUST DE BAZAN.
DON CÆSAR DE BAZAN.
DON GURITAN.
THE MARQUIS DE SANTA CRUZ.
THE MARQUIS DEL BASTO.
THE COUNT OF ALBA.
THE COUNT OF CAMPOREAL
THE MARQUIS DE PRIEGO
DON MANUEL ARIAS
MONTAZGO
DON ANTONIO UBILLA
COVADENGA
GUDIEL.
A LACKEY.
AN ALCALDE.
A HUISSIER.
AN ALGUAZIL.
DONNA MARIA DE NEUBOURG, *Queen of Spain.*
DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE, *Camerera Mayor.*
CASILDA.
A DUENNA.
A PAGE.

} *Privy Councillors*

*Ladies, Lords, Privy Councillors, Pages, Duennas, Alguazils, Guards.
Huissiers of the Chamber and the Court.*

MADRID, 169—.

SCENE. — *A grand saloon in the King's palace at Madrid, splendidly furnished in the half-German style of the time of Philip IV. On the left is a large window, with gilded frame and small panes of glass. On either side of the stage, in recesses, are small doors leading into the interior apartments. At the back is a large gilded glass partition, in the centre of which are great doors, also glazed, opening on to a gallery which runs the whole width of the stage. This is masked by immense curtains that reach from the top to the bottom of the glass partition. A table, a fauteuil, and writing materials on the table. It is early morning.*

DON SALLUST enters by the small door on the left, followed by RUY BLAS and GUDIEL, who carries a kind of wallet, and sundry packages made up as though for a long journey. DON SALLUST is dressed in a black velvet costume, of the time of Charles II., with the collar of the Golden Fleece round his neck. He also wears a lighter coloured velvet cloak over his costume, embroidered with gold, and turned up with black satin. Sword and hat, with plume of white feathers. GUDIEL is in black, with a sword by his side. RUY BLAS is in livery: a tight-fitting, brown doublet; surtout, laced with red and gold; bare-headed, and no sword.



E. CHAMPOLLION SC

ADRIEN. MOREAU

RU Y BLAS.

ACT I.

DON SALLUST.

SCENE I.

DON SALLUST, GUDIEL, *and at intervals* RU Y BLAS.

DON SALLUST.

Pull the door to, Ruy Blas. Sleep still seals up their eyes.
Open the window there. The sun, ere long, will rise.

[RUY BLAS *does as he is directed, and then, on a sign from SALLUST, goes out by the door at the back.* DON SALLUST *turns suddenly from the window, out of which he has been looking, to GUDIEL.*

Yes, 't is a thunder-clap! My reign has passed away,
Gudiel. Disgraced — sent forth — all lost in one short day!
The fact is secret yet; but speak not. At my age
Such thoughtless fool's-intrigues should scarce my time
engage.

That e'er a wretched servant — one from nothing sprung —
Should dare to raise against me her too fluent tongue
Crying seduction! — mighty crime! Because she came
From Neubourg with the Queen, on me falls extra blame,
Forsooth. The sobbing creature needs must drag her
child

Through the King's private chamber — shriek in accents
wild

For justice! I am ordered to espouse her: I
Refuse; and exile — exile is my doom! Ah, why
For twenty years did I thus labour night and day
If at one single stroke the whole is cast away!
Why build me up a name that all pronounce with fear —
Yea, even those who breathe this courtly atmosphere.
Head of the house of Bazan; 't is a name of pride,
Which even the most noble never durst deride;
Yet *now* it fain must go — aye, honours — credit — all!
Then the crowd's mocking laughter will ring o'er my fall!

GUDIEL.

My lord, none know yet of it! —

DON SALLUST.

True: so far so well;
But then to-morrow must its tale of scandal tell.
By Heaven! I will not fall, — I'll simply disappear.
[*Unbuttons his doublet with violence.*

This doublet chokes me! — 'T is your work. There, now
I'm freer.

You button me as if I were some strait-laced priest!

[*Throws himself into a chair.*]

But now to work! — to plot — to mine — nor leave the
least

Trace of my secret project anywhere around.

Ha! — exiled! —

GUDIEL.

Whence deal you the blow?

DON SALLUST (*starting up*).

From underground!

And my all-unsuspecting tool shall be the Queen! —

Yes, I will be revenged! For twenty years you've been,

Gudiel, my aid, instructor, and my best of friends;

Through whom, alone, I have accomplished many ends;

With whom I have explored the secret mines of thought:

Soon shall your eyes survey the tangled web I've wrought.

I go to my estate of Finlas in Castile,

And finish what is half resolved. Time will reveal

The whole ere long; so get thee hence, and straight pre-
pare

For our departure. Be that now your only care.

In the mean time, whilst still the master, in this room

I will receive yon hair-brained trifle — you know whom!

He may be useful to my project: but away!

See to our journey.

[GUDIEL *bows and exit*, SALLUST *calls*

Ruy Blas!

RUY BLAS (*appearing at the back*).

Excellency, say

In what can I now serve you?

DON SALLUST.

As I no more sleep
 Within these walls, the keys I shall no longer keep.
 You'll give them up, and close the shutters, sir.

RUY BLAS.

I will,

My lord.

DON SALLUST.

My orders next, then, shall you thus fulfil:
 Her Majesty, the Queen, will through this gallery pass
 To the great Audience Chamber, after hearing Mass;
 Be here, Ruy Blas, within two hours.

RUY BLAS.

I will, my lord.

DON SALLUST (*at the window*).

See you that stranger yonder, who now to the guard
 A paper is displaying, and who walks this way?
 Show him the narrow stairs, by signal. He'll obey,
 And straightway come.

[RUY BLAS *makes a signal from the window*.

Seek now the chamber where the three
 Night Alguazils on duty are, or ought to be.
 See if they sleep, or are awake.

RUY BLAS (*goes to door on the right; opens it and looks in*).

My lord, they sleep.

DON SALLUST.

Speak not too loud. I shall have need of you; so keep
 Within my call. In fact, sir, see you act the spy,
 And keep at distance those who own too sharp an eye.

[*Enters DON CÆSAR DE BAZAN; his hat crushed; enveloped in a cloak much the worse for wear, below which are seen his old and wrinkled stockings and split shoes. He wears a long sword. As he enters, he and RUY BLAS exchange looks of surprise.*

DON SALLUST (*observing them aside*).

These two are known to one another 't would appear!

[*Exit RUY BLAS.*

SCENE II.

DON SALLUST, DON CÆSAR.

DON SALLUST.

Ha! — brigand! — there you are.

DON CÆSAR.

Yes, Cousin; I am here.

DON SALLUST.

Great pleasure, truly thus so *great* a knave to see!

DON CÆSAR.

I'm charmed —

DON SALLUST.

Good sir, your exploits are well known to me

DON CÆSAR.

And you appreciate? —

DON SALLUST.

Humph! — their renown is great,
And well becoming such a hair-brained rattle-pate! —
The other night, Don Charles de Mira, I have heard,

Was by some thieves waylaid, who took his much-prized
 sword,
 As well as pouch. 'T was Easter-eve it happened on,
 So, as he chanced to be a knight of good St. John,
 The rascals did not steal the cloak he wore.

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed? —

And wherefore?

DON SALLUST.

On the surface of it they could read
 The blazon of the Order. That, at least, was civil.
 What think you?

DON CÆSAR.

That this wicked age is of the devil!
 What? Can our thieves so far forget themselves as this?
 St. John bring to their level? — It is much amiss!

DON SALLUST.

And you were with them?

DON CÆSAR.

Well, indeed, I must confess
 I was amongst them; nathless in the precious mess
 I took no part, and truly laid no finger on
 The gentle Charles. I counselled only.

DON SALLUST.

Oh, well done!
 Better and better. On the Plaza Mayor then,
 But yester-eve when crowds of rough and half-clad men
 Rushed pell-mell on the Watch; *you*, too, were there!

DON CÆSAR.

Good lack!
 My worthy cousin, I would ne'er do aught so black

As get mixed up in such a dirty rabble fight
As that which then ensued. No, sir, that very night,
Hard by the uproar, 'neath some dimly-lit arcades
I walked, composing verses to the clashing blades;
They did fall to it, truly.

DON SALLUST.

That's not all.

DON CÆSAR.

What next?

DON SALLUST.

In France, it seems, you are accused by those most vexed,
With having stolen money.

DON CÆSAR.

That, of course, might be;
Because a Frenchman is my natural enemy.

DON SALLUST.

Upon the road to Mons in Flanders, it would seem,
Even the money of the clergy you must deem
Legitimately prey. From Don Bartholomew,
Who had received it for a holy purpose, you
Must needs appropriate it with the hand of force.

DON CÆSAR.

In Flanders? — well — it might be so; but then, of
course,
I've travelled greatly. Is that all?

DON SALLUST.

Don Cæsar, I
Perspire with very shame!

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed. Now, pray you, why ?

I'm very cool.

DON SALLUST.

Our family —

DON CÆSAR.

Let it alone.

You are the representative. I am unknown.

DON SALLUST.

The other morning, sir, as out of church I came,
I was requested by a high and haughty dame,
A marquise, to inform her who the vagabond
She saw before her strutting was. Upon the ground
Dragged a long sword, surmounted by a ragged cloak ;
And in his eye and mien too eloquently spoke
Reckless defiance, impudence, keen wit and guile.

DON CÆSAR.

I hope you answered her, with your most sunny smile,
“ Ah, that's my good friend Zafari ! ” —

DON SALLUST.

Indeed, I blushed —

I felt the tell-tale blood as to my face it rushed.

DON CÆSAR.

I hope the lady laughed ? 'T is always my delight
To move the dears to laughter.

DON SALLUST.

Both by day and night
Companions of the lowest sort your steps surround.

DON CÆSAR.

With students, clerks, etc., our streets abound.

DON SALLUST.

What of the other sex ?

DON CÆSAR.

Oh, bless their gentle hearts !
In our delightful city they but play their parts.
To their enchanting forms, and lustrous, wicked eyes,
My only matin orisons must e'er arise.

DON SALLUST.

And finally, that prince — that most renowned of thieves
Matalobos of fair Galicia, who achieves
More than all put together, *he* is of your friends.

DON CÆSAR.

Pray stop one moment, cousin, ere the long list ends
Of my delinquencies. Let's talk plain common sense
For just one moment. When the cold was most intense
One evening last December, I was *naked* — well
So nearly, that it gives me quite a chill to dwell
Upon the word. By good luck that egregious fop,
The Count of Alba, was, by force, compelled to drop
His gorgeous silken doublet —

DON SALLUST.

Well ?

DON CÆSAR.

It came to pass
Matalobos did here bestow it.

DON SALLUST.

By the Mass!
And shame you not to own it?

DON CÆSAR.

Wherefore be ashamed?
See for yourself. 'T is like a gorgeous picture, framed
[*Throws open his cloak and displays a splendid rose-
coloured silken doublet embroidered with gold.*]
With burnished gold! embroidered and tricked out with
style
To call from the fastidious a delighted smile!—
What's more, the pockets are all lined with billets-doux
Fresh, doubtless, from sweet hands; and of an odour, too,
Most grateful to the Count: I know they were to me,
For when with inside empty, which was frequently,
I sate, o'ercome with hunger, disappointment, wrath,
I read, and seemed filled up with love, if not with broth.

DON SALLUST.

Don Cæsar —

DON CÆSAR.

My good cousin, let there be a truce
Both to your kind reproaches and your free abuse.
I am a mighty seignior, and your near relation,
But, just at present, meet not with your approbation.
I'm Cæsar, Count of Garofa. I had domains,
Riches, grand palaces; but, at my birth, my brains
Got somehow wrong — at least, I must suppose they did,
As twenty fleeting years sufficed to see me rid
Of every stiver of my heritage. Alas!
I grieve much for my creditors; but let that pass.
I gave them all the slip, changed my once honoured
name;

And not two people now could tell from whence I came.
 I am a boon-companion ; free to breathe the air,
 Which very oft I do when sleeping in the square
 Before some palace. This for some years past I've done,
 And the hap-hazard life has so far with me won
 That I care not to change it. 'T is a jovial life !
 Albeit precarious, and with adventure rife —
 But that's a trifle. Wine or water I can drink —
 Whichever offers first — from neither would I shrink.
 Whene'er I feel myself in philosophic vein
 I seek the palace — scene of my brief, glorious reign —
 And walking up and down in front, I moralise
 Upon one fact : how quick we fall ! — how slow we
 rise ! —

Yes, freely once my glittering gold I flung away ;
 And now good cousin mine, lend me ten crowns to-day ?

DON SALLUST.

First give an ear to me —

DON CÆSAR (*crossing his arms*).

What may be your intent ?

DON SALLUST.

You may be useful, sir ; that's why for you I sent.
 Cæsar, I am a lonely man. I'm rich ; and more —
 Your elder by some years. I would not close the door
 Against you ; nay, I anxiously would aid — would balk
 The deep abyss of prey. To it I see you walk
 With reckless, half-closed eyes : and, worthless as you
 are,

In that too fatal pathway I would raise a bar.
 In short, I'll pay your debts, and give you once again
 Your own ; so Zafari must sink — Cæsar remain
 As he was once before — in his high state re-dressed —

The idol of the fair — by all the world caressed !
 My coffers freely I will open to your use,
 And ne'er denominate your outlay as abuse
 Of my good nature. No. Relations ever must
 Be treated nobly, for their claims —

DON CÆSAR (*exploding with enthusiasm*).

Are always just !

You are about to add. O gentle cousin mine,
 Your wit I always looked upon as devilish fine ! —
 Continue, pray ! —

DON SALLUST.

There's one condition, — only one
 To name to you, and then the bargain made is done.
 In the mean time, accept my purse. [*Offering it.*]

DON CÆSAR (*taking it*).

'T is full of gold !

What sight more glorious can men's gladdened eyes
 behold !

DON SALLUST.

Five hundred ducats I'm about to give —

DON CÆSAR (*dazzled*).

Marquis —

DON SALLUST.

And from to-day —

DON CÆSAR.

Cousin ! I'm all your own for this,
 Be the conditions whatsoe'er they may — command !
 And straightway, at your bidding, I will walk or stand.
 Whether the mission I've to do be good or evil —
 E'en if it be to fight a duel with the devil !

DON SALLUST.

'T is not your sword I seek for, worthy Cæsar.

DON CÆSAR.

No? —

I see not in what else I can devotion show.

DON SALLUST (*approaching and lowering his voice*).

You have a very large acquaintance in Madrid
Among the roughs and scamps, and know where they lie
hid?

DON CÆSAR.

You do me honour —

DON SALLUST.

Were it of necessity
To raise an uproar, such a thing, of course, could be?

DON CÆSAR (*laughing heartily*).

Is it an opera that you 're about to write?
In what capacity my aid do you invite?
As painter or musician? Fun you know's my forte.

DON SALLUST.

I speak to Cæsar on affairs of deep import,
And not to Zafari. [*Lowering his voice still more.*]

So lend a careful ear

To secrets dark which will no gleam of daylight bear.
Yes; I repeat it — shrouded in the deepest gloom
A certain project must be ripened into bloom
Which will bear baleful fruit. I am not really bad,
But from corroding thought a respite must be had.
Enough. I say you shall be rich, but you must aid
To build a fabric, which shall be so subtly made
That, whilst it dazzles, it shall hold a fine-wrought net

That shall enmesh its victim. You see not, as yet,
My drift; but know that it is vengeance!

DON CÆSAR.

Vengeance?

DON SALLUST.

Yes.

DON CÆSAR.

On whom?

DON SALLUST.

Well — on a woman — nothing more nor less!

DON CÆSAR (*drawing himself up disdainfully and proudly*).

Halt there, my cousin, halt! Speak not another word
Until my sentiments thereon you shall have heard.
The man who secretly, and also basely, tries
To thus revenge himself, by secrets or by lies,
Or any other means, upon a woman frail
Is, in my estimation, placed beyond the pale
Of every feeling man for man can entertain!
I say, did noblest blood flow through his every vein —
Were he the proudest of the proud in rank and name,
Did clarions sound his progress with their loud acclaim,
Could he do aught so vile, despite his name and race,
His manly mind, and no less manly heart debase,
I would behold him on the highest gibbet hang
And join in execrations as around they rang!

DON SALLUST.

Cæsar! —

DON CÆSAR.

Add not another word to what is said.
As for your secret — keep it! Take the dross instead!
[*Dashes the purse down at SALLUST'S feet and continues.*]

It is an outrage e'en to hear of it. Oh ! I
 Can understand that men should plunder, rob, and die,
 Or cause the death of others. In the deepest night
 Seize on some fort, or, as a common robber, fight
 Against his jailers, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth,
 Regardless of the upshot, man 'gainst man, forsooth !
 But basely, secretly to dig a deep abyss
 And guide a *woman's* footsteps to it — ere do this,
 Ere thus enrich myself at any price so vile
 I'd dare a fierce ordeal — ay, mount a fiery pile,
 And self-convicted, even 'mid my terrors grim,
 Bid the wild, gaping rabble tear me limb from limb ! —

DON SALLUST.

Cousin —

DON CÆSAR.

I seek for nothing at such hands as yours !
 My life is in the air of freedom — out of doors —
 And when, in town, perchance I shiver, nothing loath
 Am I that any thief my nakedness may clothe.
 All sense of what some please to call propriety
 I banished when I warred against society.
 Yes ; give me freedom ! Let me stretch my weary length
 Before some palace, and rejoice in health and strength :
 My head well shaded, and my feet within the rays
 Of the fierce sun. Enough — farewell. I go my ways.
 Let Heaven (always just) decide betwixt us two,
 Which is the upright one, Don Sallust. I to you
 Leave the obsequious courtiers. They're your counter-
 parts.

I pit my worthless rags against their cringing hearts —
 Dwell with your serpents ever : I my wolves prefer.
 [About to depart.

DON SALLUST.

Stay yet a moment ! —

DON CÆSAR.

Hark you, my most gracious sir !
 Let us abbreviate this interview. If so
 Its object is a prison — I can straightway go.

DON SALLUST.

Come, come — 't is well. I deemed your nature different.
 I've put you to the proof, and now I'm quite content.
 Give me your hand ! —

DON CÆSAR.

What's this ? —

DON SALLUST.

I really did but joke ;
 And 't was with no ulterior object that I spoke.

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed ? — Humph ! — singular — I scarce my thoughts
 connect :
 Astonishment upsets me — Let me now reflect :
 The plot — the woman — the revenge —

DON SALLUST.

Chimera — all !
 The whole collapses in a heap ! which you may call
 Imagination — folly ! — What you please. Mere dreams !

DON CÆSAR.

Aha ! — so much the better. And those pleasing gleams
 Of generosity about my debts ? All froth
 As well ? Five hundred ducats ! Is that also broth
 To set before a dullard ?

DON SALLUST.

Nay ; I'll bring them here.
[Moves to back and signs to RUY BLAS to enter.]

DON CÆSAR (*watching him from the front of the stage*).
 There's traitor on that countenance: 't is pretty clear.
 The lips say "yes" — the cunning glance says "we shall
 see."

DON SALLUST (*to RUY BLAS who enters*).
 Ruy Blas, stay here. [*To CÆSAR.*] I'll soon return.
[*He goes out.*]

SCENE III.

DON CÆSAR, RUY BLAS.

DON CÆSAR (*eagerly to RUY BLAS*).
Ha! — can it be
 Ruy Blas! — I thought 't was no mistake I made.

RUY BLAS.
And I
 Felt sure 't was Zafari that I beheld. But why
 Venture within this palace?

DON CÆSAR.
Thereby hangs a tale.
 I'm but a bird. I float on every passing gale.
 But you? Why this same livery? Is't a disguise?

RUY BLAS.
 It would be so indeed did I dress otherwise.

DON CÆSAR.
 What mean you?

RUY BLAS.
Let me take your hand, and hold it fast
 As I was wont to do in that once joyous past

When we were comrades. Oft when scarcely knew I
where
To lay my head ; and the next meal was all my care —
Ay, all engrossing — when the cold I could withstand,
Because with freedom roamed I over all the land —
You knew me well ; and also knew I was a man
Born of the people, like yourself. Our morn began
Most cheerfully ! Brothers, all took us for. We danced,
We drank, we sang until the day was far advanced ;
And when night came, beneath the star-lit, azure sky
Still, side by side, we slept beneath one watchful Eye.
Yes ; everything we shared. Then came the parting day,
And each went sadly forth upon his lonely way.
And now again we meet, after four fleeting years ;
And still before my eyes my Zafari appears
Unaltered ; rich though poor ; as reckless as of yore —
As if “to-morrow ” never waited at his door !
But, brother, what a change is brought about in me !
An orphan, sent to College, out of charity,
I learned the sciences, and also, to my cost
How to be proud and idle ; how to dream — be lost
In a poetic heaven of my own, when trade
And toil had better far become me. But arrayed
In my own aimless confidence, I still kept on
When me your mocking laugh to reason would have won.
I know not what ambition stirred within my soul,
But I walked ever onwards toward an unseen goal.
All things seemed possible — all real, and I believed
Fortune required but wooing to be straight achieved !
Whole days before some gorgeous palaces I spent,
To watch the wealthy Great as to and fro they went.
Vague satisfaction ! But one day, good brother, dying
With hunger, I espied upon the pavement lying
Some scraps of bread, and ignominiously I ate
Full gladly, although murmuring at my adverse fate.

Yes, barefoot, at the age of twenty, through the streets
I've wandered musing o'er the bitters and the sweets
Humanity must taste. Great castles in the air
I reared — and projects, high as mountains, and as fair :
I deemed — poor fool ! — that by the world I was re-
quired —
See now the upshot ! — as a lackey I'm attired !

DON CÆSAR.

I know that Hunger's portal is a low one, friend ;
And he who, when hard driven, must the lowest bend,
May rise the highest. Fortune hath her ebb and flow.
Therefore I say, on Hope your full reliance throw.

RUY BLAS.

You know the Marquis de Finlas my master is ?

DON CÆSAR.

I do As residence this place is not amiss.

RUY BLAS.

Until the last half hour I never set my feet
Within the palace walls.

DON CÆSAR.

How comes it that we meet
Here then ? Your master has the charge of it, maybe ?

RUY BLAS.

To him at all times is the entrée hither free.
Hard by he has a private lodging ; but the light
Of day ne'er sees him there. I, too, live near. At night
A key, that he possesses, opes a secret door
Into this palace, and across the royal floor

The Marquis leads his masked companions, who ne'er
 speak
 Except in whispers. What they here discuss, or seek
 Is a deep mystery ; but, doubtless, these his spies
 Are thus instructed where to use their prying eyes.
 Two mutes are *my* companions, but 'neath my control :
 My name they know not.

DON CÆSAR.

Humph ! — 't is cheerful on the whole.
 I understand. The secret minions he commands
 He here receives. He's deep, and holds much in his
 hands.

RUY BLAS.

But yesterday he bade me seek him here at dawn ;
 And then this odious livery must needs go on
 As soon as I arrived.

DON CÆSAR (*taking his hand*).

Cling fast to hope ! —

RUY BLAS.

Alas !

You know not, friend, the cost. It is a bitter pass ! —
 Pride, honour — everything beneath this clothing vile
 Must sink. Slavery is rampant ! and yet all the while
 A furious passion here within consumes ! — its breath
 Creating torments which are worse by far than death !

DON CÆSAR.

What mean you ?

RUY BLAS.

This. Invent, imagine ; nay, suppose
 A thousand most improbable events arose
 Around, before you — to the verge of some abyss

Headlong impelled you, even though the fatal hiss
Of some dread, monstrous reptile pierced your awe-struck
ears —

Picture all this, I say, and worse! E'en then appears
Nothing that to my direful secret can compare.
Canst guess?—Oh, who could guess!—My Zafari, I dare
Scarce breathe the words to thee — I love the Queen!

DON CÆSAR.

The Queen! —

Just Heaven! —

RUY BLAS.

Upon a lofty dais may be seen —
Sometimes at Aranjuez, and sometimes in this town —
A man, beneath a canopy, who wears a crown! —
Who though but rarely seen, yet sways one half the
earth;
Before whose haughty presence each one sinks his birth —
However high — before whose throne to covered stand
Is deemed the pinnacle of honour in the land:
For all must bow before him, all must humbly kneel
To show how deeply they that lofty presence feel.
Man, like ourselves, why should we own so deep a dread?
Because by his one word we might to death be led! —
Well — lackey as I am — of him I dare now say
I'm jealous! —

DON CÆSAR.

Jealous of the King! —

RUY BLAS.

Yes — woeful day
That made her wife to him! — Too true — I love his
wife!

DON CÆSAR.

Unhappy man! —

RUY BLAS.

Oh, listen ! 'T is his worthless life

That is the cause to that poor Queen of misery,
 Of endless weariness, of sleepless woe to me !
 I see her but too clearly in that vile resort
 Of falseness, base servility, they call a court,
 Tied to that man, that dullard of the kingly race,
 Who, old at thirty, owns but one idea, — the chase !
 I see her lovely, youthful, yet neglected thus
 When she should, dazzling, shine a centre glorious
 Of the surrounding splendour ! Bitter is the thought
 That such angelic excellence is hither brought
 To be so wasted on this second Charles, — the son
 Of a most worthless sire. Hark ! (for our minutes run
 With headlong speed) you know outside the palace walls
 The Rosaire Convent stands ? and, as each evening falls,
 The luckless Queen goes forth to seek its calm retreat ;
 When there, she seeks a certain favourite garden seat,
 And muses long amid the flowers that bloom around.
 Her chosen one is blue, and of her German ground
 Reminds her ; but in this our Spanish soil 't is rare
 To find it ; yet I sought, and soon discovered where
 A whole league hence it thrives. Each day my way I
 take

To gather just a few, and offering of them make
 To her : and when night o'er the city casts its pall
 I climb the lofty spike-protected convent wall
 To lay them on the seat near where she sadly roves
 Beneath those lofty and o'erarching chestnut groves.
 But yesterday beside those flowers I dared to place
 A folded paper, and within it words to trace
 That told of my devotion. Oh, some day, belike
 My body will be traversed by a bristling spike,
 But I shall be content, if she the flowers obtain
 And the love-breathing note !

DON CÆSAR.

'T is madness ! pray restrain
 Your ardour, and remember there is also one
 Who loves the Queen ! Count Onaté, a valiant son
 Of Mars — a major-domo or a body-guard —
 Who some day, ere your flowers can fade, may on the
 sward
 Transfix them and your heart with partisan or brand.
 But thus to love the Queen ! I fail to understand —
 To comprehend what can possess you !

RUY BLAS (*wildly*).

I know not.

But I would barter freely, to exchange my lot
 With one of those young lordlings of this splendid court,
 The soul within me ! Yes, to be in fair report
 With her I'd venture all ! stand at no sacrifice
 To win one glorious hope — the love-light of her eyes !
 O misery tenfold intensified ! to think
 That I am here upon the very verge — the brink
 Of all that's glorious in the world, yet cannot pass
 Beyond ! because I see myself, as in a glass,
 Cursed with this servile garb upon my back ! Oh, earth !
 Upon thy fragrant bosom why didst yield me birth ?
 Oh, Heaven ! — Stay — I remember. You have asked
 me when,
 And how I came to love her ? Not as other men
 Love ordinary women, but with passion vast
 As the wide world itself ! — with frenzy's burning blast ! —

DON CÆSAR.

Be calm —

RUY BLAS (*falling exhausted into a seat*).

I cannot ! — pardon me, — and leave me here.

'T is not to be expected that your ears can bear,
A madman's woes ! one, who beneath a lackey's vest
The passion of a Sovereign nurses in his breast !

DON CÆSAR.

*I leave you in your need ? I, scapegrace that I am —
Who never knew the feeling, love — I basely slam
The door, imaginary though it be, on you ! —
My friend ! — Believe me, I can still be firm and true,
And, when I get the means, will prove it. In your face
Your hopeless and mad passion I can plainly trace,
And envy you its fervour.*

*[They take hands, and for a moment gaze on each other
with expressions of sadness and friendship. DON
SALLUST enters. He comes slowly forward watching
them intently. CÆSAR and RUY BLAS do not see him.
In one hand he carries his hat and sword, which he
places on a chair ; in the other a large purse of gold
which he lays on the table.*

DON SALLUST (to DON CÆSAR.)

Here's the money.

*[RUY BLAS starts, and immediately assumes a posture of
humility.*

DON CÆSAR (starting).

Good —

That is to say — the devil ! *[Aside.]* By the Holy Rood !
As sure as fate, he has been listening — even here
Perhaps, or at the door. *[Aloud.]* Don Sallust, thanks !

*[He opens the purse and spreads the money joyfully over
the table. Whilst he is counting it, SALLUST goes to
the back of the stage, and looks at CÆSAR, to see
whether he is observed by him. He then opens a small
door on the right, and, in obedience to his signal, three*

Alguazils, dressed in black and armed with swords, enter. SALLUST points to CÆSAR. RUY BLAS stands like a statue near the table, hearing and seeing nothing.

DON SALLUST (*in a low voice to Alguazils*).

Draw near,
As soon as that man, laden with this money, leaves,
You'll follow swiftly, and, ere shelter he receives,
Rush on him — seize him — and, avoiding violence,
To Denia you'll convey him, and embark him thence.

[*Giving a parchment.*

Here is the warrant. Him, when out at sea, you'll sell
To Afric's Corsairs. See to this; and so, farewell.
A thousand piastres your reward will be.

[*Alguazils bow and exit.*

DON CÆSAR (*who has just finished counting the money*).

Now this

Is not a pleasure any one would like to miss —
To count his gold and silver. To arrange each pile
Symmetrically with a very pleasant smile! —

[*Divides it equally, and then turns to RUY BLAS.*

Good brother, here's thy half.

RUY BLAS.

How? —

DON CÆSAR (*pointing to the gold*).

Take it, man. Be free!

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

The devil! —

RUY BLAS (*shaking his head*).

No, 't is here; here only I must be.

DON CÆSAR.

Well, as you please, my friend. You play a doubtful game.

Who's wiser of the two?—

[Throws money back into purse, and puts it away.]

DON SALLUST (*observing them aside*).

Their features—much the same.

DON CÆSAR.

Adieu!

RUY BLAS.

Thy hand!—

[They shake hands and CÆSAR goes out without seeing

SALLUST, who keeps apart.]

SCENE IV.

RUY BLAS, DON SALLUST.

DON SALLUST.

Ruy Blas?

RUY BLAS.

My lord?

DON SALLUST.

Say?—am I right?

When you came here this morning it was hardly light?

RUY BLAS.

In silence to the porter, when the dawn was grey,
I gave your pass that opened up to me the way.

DON SALLUST.

Your cloak enveloped you?

RUY BLAS.

My lord, rest sure it did.

DON SALLUST.

No eyes, then, here caught sight of what beneath was hid?

RUY BLAS.

Nor here, nor in the town.

DON SALLUST.

That is as it should be.

Shut yonder door, sir.

[Indicating door through which CÆSAR passed.]

Good. Now doff this livery.

[RUY BLAS takes off his livery coat and throws it upon a chair.]

Give me a specimen — you write a fair, bold hand!

[Signs to RUY BLAS to sit at the table and write, which he does.]

To-day you're secretary; so, pray understand
I keep no secrets from you. Now; a billet-doux
To Donna Praxedis, love-queen, and demon too
Upon occasion. So, begin: "A danger, deep
And terrible, is hanging o'er my head. To sleep
I dare not, so to aid me in my pressing need
I pray thee, O my gentle queen, use all the speed
That time will lend thee, and this night to me repair
At my lone house, or sink I must in deep despair."

[Laughs and stops short.]

A danger! Yes — that's good. The way I've turned
that phrase

Pleases me well. Most women have a sort of craze

For rushing to the rescue of the very men
 Who cause themselves to fall! Ha! — such is life. Now
 then,
 Continue thus: “Unknown, unrecognized at night,
 Facing the avenue, a door will meet your sight;
 And there you’ll enter. One most faithful to the cause
 Will welcome you within.” Perfection this! Now pause
 And sign.

RUY BLAS.

Your name, my lord?

DON SALLUST.

Not so, Cæsar — that name
 Suits well for an adventure.

RUY BLAS.

I presume the dame
 Is never like to recognize the hand?

DON SALLUST.

No fear.
 The seal is all sufficient. Frequently from here
 In the same style I write. But listen, sir! — this day
 I leave you in the palace, and must speed away.
 Your circumstances are about to undergo
 A wondrous change: to me, before it can be so,
 Obedience most implicit you will have to swear: —
 As yet I’ve found you docile —

RUY BLAS (*bowing*).

My good lord —

DON SALLUST.

For greater favours — for a wider destiny — Prepare

RUY BLAS (*holding up the note*). .

To whom shall I address this note ?

DON SALLUST.

Leave it to me.

[*Going up to RUY BLAS with a significant air.*

I have your happiness at heart.

[*A pause. He signs to him to place himself again at the table.*

Write. "I, Ruy Blas,

The lackey to Monseigneur Marquis of Finlas,

Will faithfully, on all occasions, at command,

Obeys his orders. Witness here this day my hand."

Now, sign your name. Put in the date. So. That is well.

[*RUY BLAS having signed and dated the paper as directed,*

DON SALLUST *folds it, and puts it carefully away with the previous note in his portfolio.*

A singular coincidence. It so befell.

A sword was brought to me to-day — ha ! there it lies

Upon that chair. [*He takes the sword from the chair.*

The belt, you see, with sunny dyes

Is richly brodered. Here's a flower upon the hilt

Carved by a famous hand, and gorgeously gilt —

What think you of it ?

[*Passes the belt over RUY BLAS'S shoulder.*

Very well, it might suit you —

Upon my word, it really does become you too !

Some one is here. [*Listens.*] The Queen herself will pass ere long.

The Marquis del Basto is coming.

[*The doors at the back are thrown open. DON SALLUST removes his cloak, and throws it over the shoulders of RUY BLAS, who seems half stupefied with astonishment.*

SCENE V.

DON SALLUST, RUY BLAS, *the* MARQUIS DEL BASTO.
Afterwards the MARQUIS DE SANTA CRUZ, *then the*
 COUNT OF ALBA *and all the Court.*

DON SALLUST (*to the* MARQUIS).

Ere the throng
 Of courtiers here arrives, Lord Marquis, give me leave —
 And my young cousin, Count of Garofa, receive.

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

Good Heavens! —

DON SALLUST (*aside to him*).

Hush! —

MARQUIS (*saluting* RUY BLAS).

Sir, I am charmed —

[*Takes RUY BLAS's hand which he yields to him, but with much embarrassment.*]

DON SALLUST (*aside to* RUY BLAS).

Spoil not the game.

Salute him! [*RUY BLAS bows profoundly to the* MARQUIS.

MARQUIS (*to* RUY BLAS).

Sir, your mother's was a much loved name.—

He's greatly changed. I scarcely recognise him now.

[*Aside to* DON SALLUST

DON SALLUST (*to* MARQUIS).

Well — ten years' absence —

MARQUIS.

True —

DON SALLUST (*his hand on RUY BLAS's shoulder*).

The same free soul, I vow !

Do you remember, Marquis, what a prodigal ! —

How he made ducks and drakes of money, jewels — all !

What balls, what concerts — galas, whereto all were bid,

That fairly dazzled — yea, half-frenzied bright Madrid ! —

Then came a crash ! — three years, and all this fire was
out.

Now India sends him home once more to flaunt about ! —

RUY BLAS (*aside to SALLUST*).

My lord —

DON SALLUST.

Call me thy cousin — so indeed we are ;

And our old lineage can be followed up so far

That distance veiling, like a mist, the gorgeous scene

Steals nothing from the splendour lurking 'neath the
screen.

Of Finlas, Marquis, *I* ; *you* Cæsar of Bazan —

Both equal in our rank — not one the better man.

Your source, fair Aragon — mine, Portugal ! We tower

Proud trees ! I, fruit of one : you of the other, flower !

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

What motive can be his ?

[*During the above speech the MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ,*

DON ALVAR DE BAZAN, *a venerable man with white hair
and moustache has approached them.*

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

I've listened ; and with you

Must claim the privilege to call him cousin, too.

DON SALLUST.

It is quite true, my lord. We of the same stock come.
 Don Cæsar — [*Presenting* RUY BLAS.]

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

Surely 't is not he 't was said the tomb
 Had claimed some years ago?

DON SALLUST.

The same.

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

Returned to life!

DON SALLUST.

From India. You remember him?

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

It was my wife
 Who saw him born; and I — well, very nearly, too.

DON SALLUST (*aside to* RUY BLAS).

The dotard's almost blind; that's why at once he knew
 Your face and figure!

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ (*to* RUY BLAS).

Cousin, let me grasp your hand.

RUY BLAS (*bowing*).

My lord —

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ (*to* RUY BLAS).

I'm charmed indeed. My aid you can command.

DON SALLUST (*taking SANTA CRUZ aside*).

I'm going to pay his debts; and you, my worthy lord,
Material help to me can very well afford
If, by your influence within this palace walls,
Some honourable post for his acceptance falls
About the King — or Queen —

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ (*in a low voice*).

Hum — ha — Well, let me see —

Of course, he's of a most distinguished family.

I'll think of it.

[SALLUST *passes on, and presents RUY BLAS to several lords, and finally to the COUNT OF ALBA, who is exquisitely dressed.*

DON SALLUST.

This is my cousin, Don Cæsar,

The Count of Garofa, close by Velalcazar.

[*The courtiers salute RUY BLAS, who still seems confused.*

I did not see you at the ballet last night, Count —

[*To ALBA.*] The dancing was delightful.

[*Admiring his jewelled collar, etc.*

What a splendid mount

Your collar has !

COUNT OF ALBA.

Ha ! — yes ; and I had one before

Which was intrinsically worth a great deal more,

But it was stolen by Matalobos, who took

Not only that, but with it my best doublet — Look !

The Queen is here.

HUISSIER (*from the back*).

My lords, your several stations gain,
And give your morning welcome to the Queen of Spain.

DON SALLUST (*aside to RUY BLAS*).

Bethink yourself, Ruy Blas ! How ! do you thus give way
To agitation ? Rouse, man ! 'T is your dawning day
Of fortune ! I 'm about to quit Madrid, and give
My house near here for your own use. Go there, and
live,

And look upon it, with its servants, as your own.
I yield you everything, — the secret keys alone
Excepted. Do my wishes, and your fortune 's made.
So, forward in your path ! — 't is clear. Be not afraid.
Blindfold, go on ! my eyes, Ruy Blas, will act for *yours*.
Ere long, fresh orders you 'll receive. See — at the doors
More guards appear. [*More guards are seen advancing.*]

HUISSIER (*in a loud voice*).

The Queen !

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

The Queen ! —

[THE QUEEN, *magnificently attired, surrounded by her ladies and pages, appears under a canopy borne by four gentlemen of the chamber bare-headed. RUY BLAS, overcome by emotion, regards the whole as if it were some dazzling vision. The grandees all cover in the presence of the Sovereign. DON SALLUST rushes to the chair on which lies the hat, and hurriedly puts it upon RUY BLAS'S head.*]



DON SALLUST (*aside to RUY BLAS*).

Are you insane,
Cæsar? On with your hat! You're a grandee of Spain!

RUY BLAS (*mechanically, aside to SALLUST*).

And what command, my lord, do you now lay on me?

DON SALLUST (*aside, indicating THE QUEEN*).

That you will please this woman — yes, her *lover* be!



SCENE. — *A saloon contiguous to the bedchamber of THE QUEEN. On the left a small door leading into this apartment. On the right, in a recess, another small door. At the back, large windows standing open. Large table in the centre. Fauteuils, etc. The statue of a saint, richly carved, on a bracket against the wall. Under it the inscription, "Santa Maria Esclava." On the opposite side a Madonna, in front of which hangs a golden lamp. Near to it a full-length portrait of King Charles II. It is afternoon on a beautiful summer day.*

As the curtain rises THE QUEEN, DONNA MARIA DE NEUBOURG is discovered sitting in one corner of the room surrounded by young and beautiful ladies. THE QUEEN wears a rich robe of white and silver. She is busy with her embroidery frame, and from time to time interrupts her employment to talk. At the opposite corner of the room the DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE, Camerera Mayor, sits in a high-backed chair, also engaged in embroidery. She is an old lady dressed in black. Near to her are several Duennas working at a table. At the back, standing stiffly at attention, is DON GURITAN, the Major-domo. A military-looking man of about fifty years of age, and dressed with exaggerated elegance, and has a profusion of ribbons all about him, even in his shoes.



F. Champollion sc

ADRIEN. MOUREAU

ACT II.
THE QUEEN OF SPAIN.

SCENE I.

THE QUEEN, DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE, DON GURITAN, CASILDA, *Duennas, Ladies of the Court.*

THE QUEEN.

Don Sallust then is gone? I ought to feel at ease,
And yet I am not. Strange! his presence seems to freeze
The blood within my veins. He hates me.

CASILDA.

He is gone —

Exiled at your request!

4

THE QUEEN.

He hates me — me alone.

CASILDA.

Your Majesty! —

THE QUEEN.

'T is true, Casilda — true, though strange —
 Yet even from the first I've marked in him no change:
 My evil angel always. But the other day,
 When to kiss hands he came, before he went away,
 He joined the usual throng that passed before the throne
 Whereon I sate, my eyes on sudden caught his own
 Which seemed to flash vindictively as he, in turn,
 Bent o'er my hand. His kiss seemed on my flesh to burn
 As though a serpent's mouth had touched it! And I
 saw —
 Even as he retreated — his fierce fingers draw
 The dagger partly from its sheath — I shuddered then!

CASILDA.

Nay, madame —

THE QUEEN.

Girl, that kiss e'er haunts me, even when
 I seek my couch and sleep. Still, in a hideous dream
 I feel its fire; I see the fierce, vindictive gleam
 Of those dread eyes, which then some monstrous demon
 owns,
 And tremors seize me lest I hear in scathing tones
 The hatred burning in that serpent's kiss! — I start,
 And wake; the blood half-frozen round my beating
 heart!
 What say you now to this?

CASILDA.

Dear madame, fantasy.

THE QUEEN.

It may be so ; but care lies heavily on me !—

[*Aside.*] Yes ; from their eyes my inward sorrow I must hide.

[*To CASILDA.*] Tell me — those mendicants that shrank away outside,

Are they still there ?

CASILDA (*goes to window*).

Yes, madame ; in the courtyard still.

THE QUEEN.

Throw them my purse.

CASILDA (*takes the purse and throws it out of window*).

Oh, madame, you indeed fulfil

Your duties nobly.

[*She points to DON GURITAN, who still maintains the same position as before, but who has his eyes fixed in mute admiration on THE QUEEN.*

Pray you, have some pity on
The faithful Count Onaté, whose fixed eyes have shone
With adoration on you for the last half hour.
Give him a word, if nothing more be in your power.

THE QUEEN (*aside to her*).

It wearies me to look at him.

CASILDA.

Fair Sovereign, yea —

But grant him just one word.

THE QUEEN (*aloud*).

Count Onaté — good day.

[DON GURITAN, *with three profound bows, approaches THE QUEEN, and, with a deep sigh, kisses her hand, which THE QUEEN permits with an indifferent and abstracted air. DON GURITAN then returns to his place at the side of the Camerera Mayor's chair.*

CASILDA.

Poor heron! on the sweet pure streamlet thus he throws
His eager glance. He dips, and strikes; then off he goes
Delighted for the time.

THE QUEEN.

Hush!

CASILDA.

'Tis for him, I ween,
A joy, one word, however simple, from the Queen!
[*Admiring a casket on a small table near to her.*
Oh, what a lovely casket!

THE QUEEN.

I've the key of it.

CASILDA.

This scented sandal-wood is truly exquisite!

THE QUEEN (*giving CASILDA the key*).

Open it, child. You'll find it full of relics. These
I mean to send to Neubourg. They are sure to please
My father.

[*She pauses an instant, as if lost in thought: then resumes aside.*

No! I will not now give way to thought,

For what there lies is with such dark discomfort fraught,
That better 't is to banish it. [*To CASILDA.*] Away, my
child,

And seek a book within my chamber — I am wild,
Or mad! — The books are all in Spanish. There's not
one

In German. I am weary. What can I have done
That the King keeps thus ever from me? In the chase
His time is passed; and in six months I've seen his face
For twelve days only.

[*Relapses into reverie; then rouses herself, and starts up.*
I will now go forth!

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising and curtsying*).

Before

The Queen goes forth, the order is that every door
That bars her passage shall stand open; but the hand
That wields the keys must be a grandee of the land,
And he is not within the palace at this hour.

THE QUEEN.

So I am but a prisoner! What avails my power
As Queen, then, Duchess?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*curtsying profoundly*).

I am Camerera Mayor:

As such I do my duty.

[*Reseats herself.*

THE QUEEN (*reseating herself, and resting her head upon
her hand*).

Then to thought and care

I must resign myself again! [*Aloud.*] No, no! Bring
cards! —

Ladies, we'll play together.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising, to ladies*).

Hold! She who regards
Her own position here will pause. No Queen, or King,
May touch a card, unless, perchance, the game should
bring
Their equals, or relations, round them. 'T is the rule,
And law.

THE QUEEN (*angrily*).

Send then for my relations!

CASILDA (*aside*).

Starched old fool!

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*crossing herself*).

The reigning King, my liege, was of his kin bereft
When died his pious mother. He alone is left.
[*Curtseys and reseats herself.*]

THE QUEEN (*to CASILDA*).

Then let them serve the luncheon. I can eat, at least.

CASILDA.

Yes, surely, madame.

THE QUEEN.

You shall join me in the feast.

CASILDA.

Ah, that will be delightful! [*Aside.*] Will the old one
groan?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising and curtseying*).

The Queen, his Majesty being absent, eats alone.
[*Reseats herself.*]

THE QUEEN (*excitedly*).

This is too much! Good heavens! what am I to do?
I must not play — not eat — I am a prisoner, too!
For the last twelvemonth I have lived this wretched life!

CASILDA (*aside, regarding THE QUEEN with compassion*).

'Tis paying much to be a mighty monarch's wife, —
This weary court existence! To be thus immured,
And every look and motion watched: and those endured
Who are scarce bearable — such as yon lover there
Who stands all day admiring, with his nose in air!
[*Indicating GURITAN.*]

THE QUEEN (*to CASILDA*).

What shall we do? Come, think of something.

CASILDA.

Madame, send
Straight for the Ministers. Bid them all here attend
And hold a council, in the absence of the King,
In presence of your Majesty.

THE QUEEN (*smiling*).

That's scarce the thing
In which to find amusement. Where's the humour in
Eight sinister and wrinkled visages? To win
A smile from them would be a giant's task. No, child;
No pleasantry from them could ever be beguiled.
I love not politics, which is their meat and drink,
Their breath and life: so of some better subject think.

CASILDA.

Well, then, for your amusement shall I summon here
A gallant, elegant, and youthful cavalier?

THE QUEEN.

Casilda! —

CASILDA.

Madame, 't would be really quite a treat
 If with a youthful visage we could only meet ; —
 Our eyes, forever fixed upon these ancient crones,
 Will lose their first fresh lustre, as a voice its tones
 For want of practice.

THE QUEEN.

Laugh, thou thoughtless one ; some day
 Thy heart will sink, perhaps, beneath the stern array
 Of woes besieging it. When sleep forsakes the eyes
 How soon, alas ! joy spreads her painted wings, and flies !
 One only joy to me is for the present left,
 That is my garden walk — of all the rest bereft.

CASILDA.

And yet, O Queen, that may be but a doubtful joy !
 Treason may lurk behind the marbles to destroy :
 And then the convent walls are high, — so very high
 They overtop the trees —

THE QUEEN.

But shut not out the sky ! —
 Would I could wander forth !

CASILDA (*lowering her voice*).

This is a prison, drear
 Though brilliant — wearisome — and, Heaven knows,
 austere
 As antiquated pomp can make it. You can be,
 Whene'er it pleases you, as the plumed heron, free ! —
 Say but one single word, and, under cloud of night,
 Into the town we'll wander.

THE QUEEN.

Hush ! — clandestine flight ! —
 Never !

CASILDA.

'T would be so easy —

THE QUEEN.

Peace! —

[*Moves away from CASILDA and relapses into reverie.*

Would I were back

In Germany, with my good parents, and could track
My once loved rambles 'mid its fair and leafy bowers,
In days of yore — when I could cull its freshest flowers
And, with my sister, weave them in a garland. Yes,
Well I remember when the dark man, in dark dress,
Before me stood, and told me in his high-flown strain,
“Madame, I bow before the future Queen of Spain.”
Joyous, my father; and my mother, through her tears,
Prayed Heaven incessantly to grant me happy years!
Alas! e'en now, perchance, they both together weep,
For they have learned, ere this, what vigils I must keep —
What weary hours I pass. My German birds are dead!
[CASILDA, *who has crept near to THE QUEEN, pretends to*
wring the neck of a bird, at the same time regarding
the Camerera Mayor.

My German flowers must not before me raise the head.
No words of love e'er greet me; yet I am a Queen —
And once I had my freedom. [To CASILDA.] True, those
walls they screen

Much that at evening would be pleasing. Woe is me!
I'm weary! [A song is heard outside at a distance.
What is that?

CASILDA.

Some peasants it must be
Who, as they toil the hot and dusky road along,
Are keeping up their spirits with a joyful song.

[The chorus of voices draws nearer and nearer, and at last, as they pass in front of the palace, the words of the song become audible.]

SONG.

Ah, where then is the good
Of listening to a bird
That warbles in the wood ?
In thee its voice is heard.

The stars with doubtful gleam
In heaven's azure rise ;
But purer is the beam
From thy bright loving eyes !

Sweet April, poets sing,
Renews the faded bower ;
But in thy heart shall spring
The fairest, sweetest flower !

This bright-winged bird of fire,
This day-star from above,
This flower that must aspire,
Is all-absorbing Love !

[The voices gradually die away in the distance.]

THE QUEEN (*musingly*).

Love ! Yes, they must be happy. Ah, their voices make
My half-crushed heart rejoice, and, at the same time, ache.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*to DUENNAS*).

Those women's song disturbs the Queen. Go, send them
hence !

THE QUEEN.

Poor women ! No ; to us their song gives no offence
Leave them to pass in peace.

[To CASILDA, pointing to one of the windows at the back.]

From there, the wood less thick
Will yield a view of them. Come to the window, quick !
[She goes towards the window with CASILDA.]

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising and curtseying*).
A Queen of Spain should never from the window gaze.

THE QUEEN (*stops, and returns to her seat*).
E'en so. The sun that towards the west now points his
rays;
The waning glories of the slow declining light;
The coming splendours of the azure, starry night;
The distant songs that hail the welcome hours of rest,
Are now no more for me. Can it be for the best
That I should be cut off from all the world?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*making signs that all should retire*).

To-day
Is sacred to Apostles. Ladies, haste away.

THE QUEEN.
You leave me?

CASILDA.
Madame, to the order we must bow.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*curtseying profoundly*).
We leave your Majesty to your devotions now.
[*All retire.*]

SCENE II.

THE QUEEN (*alone*).

To my devotions? Rather say, to bitter thought!
For how escape when, face to face, thus with it brought?
Poor soul in darkness rayless! [In reverie.
Yes, they have left me — all!
The mark of that one hand in blood upon the wall! —

He must be wounded. Why, oh, why such hazard run
 To climb the guarded height? and then, so little won!
 To bring those few blue flowers that they refuse me here,
 To brave the dangerous spikes that mangle. Yes, with
 fear,

And yet with pleasure, did I find a piece of lace
 Torn in the daring effort; and it finds a place
 Upon my heart! Oh, every drop of blood thus spilled
 Out-values all the tears my eyes so oft have filled.
 Each time that I have sought yon tree-embowered seat
 My prayer has been that Heaven would guide away my
 feet —

Yet I return! Now three whole days have passed away,
 And he comes not again with flowers to cheer me. May
 Thy wound, poor youth, soon heal! May'st never know
 the smart

That tortures thus in exile my lone, careworn heart!
 Thou riskest everything to bring to me that flower,
 And, in return, seek'st naught — no rank, nor place, nor
 power —

To yield me pleasure e'en thy life-blood would be given —
 Blessings rest on thee, unknown youth, on earth — in
 Heaven!

[*She suddenly places her hand on her heart.*
 His letter is like fire upon my heart!

[*Relapses into reverie.*
 Then he —

Implacable Don Sallust! Even now I see
 Him near me standing. Like some spectre, dark and grim,
 He menaces me! Must I then be lost by him?
 Or by the other one, my better angel, saved! —
 Betwixt the two I stand. He, who hath so much braved,
 Will save me from the other! Feeble feel I now
 Although a Queen!

[*Kneeling before the Virgin.*
 Madonna, I before thee bow,

Yet scarce dare raise my eyes to thee !

[Suddenly starting up.

Great Heaven ! — the lace ! —

The flower ! — the letter !

[She tears from her bosom a crumpled letter, a fragment of lace stained with blood, and a faded bouquet of blue flowers, which she throws upon the table, and again falls upon her knees.

Oh, avert not now thy face

Star of the sea ! — hope of the martyr ! Grant thine aid !

Thou who art ever on the weakest side arrayed ;

Come to my call ! — *[Interrupting herself.]* That letter !

[Half turning towards the table.

Yes ! — it lures me on !

I will not read it more ! O Virgin ! — look upon

My weakness and support me !

[She rises and takes a few steps towards the table, then stops, but finally throws herself upon the letter as if unable to resist its attraction.

I must read once more,

For the last time, and tear it ! — then the task is o'er !

[She smiles sorrowfully.

Alas ! just one month since I made the same remark !

[Summoning resolution she opens and reads the letter.

“ Madame, a man who loves you, suffers in the dark,

That hides him. Earth-worm as he is, he loves the star

That gilds its glorious pathway in the skies afar.”

[Replaces the letter on the table.

If that the soul should be athirst, it needs must drink —

And even were it poison, would not from it shrink !

[She puts the letter and the lace back into her bosom.

The world is barren to me ; yet I fain would love

Some one, yea, e'en the King ; but him I fail to move

To any show of feeling. Oh, that I could bring —

[The great doors at the back are thrown open, and a

HUISSIER enters.

HUISSIER (*in a loud voice*).

A letter from the King!

THE QUEEN (*with a joyful cry, as if suddenly awakened*).
I'm saved! — at last! — the King!

SCENE III.

QUEEN, DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE, CASILDA, DON GURITAN, *Ladies of the Court, Pages*, RUY BLAS.

[*All enter in solemn procession. The DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE at their head; then the ladies. RUY BLAS remains at the back of the stage. He is splendidly dressed, and his mantle hangs over his left arm, hiding it. Two Pages bearing the letter from the King on a cushion covered with cloth of gold, kneel at a short distance from THE QUEEN.*

RUY BLAS (*aside, at the back*).

How lovely is the Queen! But why have I come here?

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

'Tis Heaven's deed! — Thanks, Monseigneur.

[*Turning to King's portrait.*

Whence do ye bear

This letter?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

From Aranjuez, may it please your Grace,
Where his most pious Majesty enjoys the chase.

THE QUEEN.

I thank him from my soul. He deems, no doubt, I grieve
At his long absence, and that I would fain receive
Some token of his love. Pray, give it me!

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Excuse

My mention of the rule, which is that I peruse
The letter first. [*Points to the letter with a deep curtsey.*]

THE QUEEN.

So. Be your duty then fulfilled.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*taking and slowly opening the letter*).

“Madame,—The wind is high, and six wolves I have
killed.”

Signed, “Charles.”

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

Alas! —

DON GURITAN (*to DUCHESS*).

And is that all?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Yes, Count; that’s all.

CASILDA (*aside*).

’T is a large letter to contain a very small
Communication. Six wolves and a boisterous wind
Are in a narrow compass easily confined.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*tendering letter to THE QUEEN*)

Will ’t please your Majesty —

THE QUEEN (*refusing to take it*).

No.

CASILDA (*to the DUCHESS*).

Can it really be

That *that* is all?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Of course. Would you expect to see
 A long epistle? As you know, our gracious King
 Is hunting daily, and thinks not of anything
 Outside the sport. He pauses — writes — that is, dic-
 tates — [*Re-examining the letter.*]

THE QUEEN (*snatching the letter from her*).

Dictates! — Let me examine it. 'T is as she states;
 Saving the signature, 't is not his hand. [*Aside.*] But
 this —

Oh, can it be? or must I from my mind dismiss
 The thought as an illusion? — No; it is the same!
[*Placing her hand on her heart.*]
 The hand that wrote is here.
 [*To the DUCHESS.*] Who with this letter came?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*pointing to RUY BLAS*).

He's there.

THE QUEEN (*turning half round to RUY BLAS*).

This Cavalier?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Yes, madame, by command
 He brought the letter to you from the King's own hand.
 'T is a young Seigneur, Marquis Santa Cruz commends
 Through me; and, for your special service, he attends.

THE QUEEN.

What is his name?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

It is Don Cæsar de Bazan,
And Count of Garofa. 'T is said, he is a man
Of very high accomplishments.

THE QUEEN.

Indeed. 'T is well —
I'll speak with him. [*To RUY BLAS.*] Sir Count? —

RUY BLAS (*aside, with emotion*).

Sweetly those accents fell.
She speaks to me!

THE QUEEN.

Approach. [*RUY BLAS, pale and trembling, advances.*]

DON GURITAN (*with jealous envy, aside*).

If he comes here, and stays,
Then I shall not remain.

THE QUEEN (*to RUY BLAS*).

You come from Aranjuez?

RUY BLAS.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

And the King was well? [*RUY BLAS bows.*]

And did dictate

To you this letter for me?

RUY BLAS (*hesitating a moment*).

Grant me leave to state
That, mounted for the chase, to an assistant near
His wishes were conveyed —

THE QUEEN (*observing him, aside*).

His eyes to me appear
Like lances in the rest. [*Aloud.*] Good. Leave us,
sir — yet, stay!

[RUY BLAS, *about to go out, returns to THE QUEEN.*
Around his Majesty was there a fair array
Of Lords? [RUY BLAS *bows.*] Who were they?

RUY BLAS.

Pardon me, I do not know
The names they bore. Three days were all I had, to go,
To stay, and to return.

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

Three days! — [*Fixes a troubled look upon him.*

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

She is a wife —
And of another! — Bitter is the inward strife
That jealousy has kindled! —

DON GURITAN (*aside to RUY BLAS*).

Hark, sir? You, I hear
Are Groomsman of the Chamber? Your official care
To-night 't will be, in case his Majesty should come,
To point the way into the Queen's retiring room.

RUY BLAS (*with emotion*).

I — point the way! — [*Aloud.*] The King is absent.

DON GURITAN.

He may surprise us.

All the same

RUY BLAS.

Ha! —



Adrien Moreau in der

DON GURITAN (*observing RUY BLAS, aside*).

What in Saint Jago's name
Ails the young fellow?

THE QUEEN (*who has kept her eyes fixed on RUY BLAS*).

Oh, how pale he is.

[RUY BLAS *staggers, and leans on the back of a fauteuil*.

CASILDA (*to THE QUEEN*).

He faints!

Dear madame.

RUY BLAS (*with great effort*).

Nay — 't is naught — fatigue — so please the Saints
A passing weakness merely — Ha! — the King! [*Aside.*
[*He falls exhausted into the fauteuil, and his left hand,*
which was hidden under his cloak, is now disclosed
bandaged with blood-stained linen.

CASILDA (*to THE QUEEN*).

His hand

Is wounded, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Wounded! —

CASILDA

Doubtless he could stand

The pain no longer.

THE QUEEN.

Hasten! — Take my vinaigrette —

Let him inhale it.

[THE QUEEN *at this moment notices the lace on RUY BLAS'S*
right sleeve.

The same lace!

[*She draws a phial from her bosom, and in her confusion*
the piece of lace, that was hidden there, comes with it.

RUY BLAS, *whose eyes have never left her, sees the fragment of lace. Their eyes meet.*

RUY BLAS (*faintly*).

Not yet — not yet —

I would not die! —

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

'T is he! —

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

Ah! — in her bosom sweet

It lay! — Yes, knowing this, death would become a treat.
[*During the confusion occasioned by the ladies pressing round RUY BLAS, what passes between him and THE QUEEN is not noticed.*]

CASILDA (*causing RUY BLAS to inspire the vinaigrette*).

How came you to be wounded? Was it lately, sir? —
Re-opened on the journey? — You did wrong to stir
Abroad in such a plight. Better do anything
Than ride post-haste to bring this letter from the King.

THE QUEEN.

A truce to questions, good Casilda.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*to CASILDA*).

Child, 't is clear

The Queen recks not of them.

THE QUEEN.

E'en if the Cavalier

Had writ the letter, he might bring it, might he not?

CASILDA.

But, madame, he has not acknowledged this, I wot,
By aught that he has said.

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

That's true. [*Aloud.*] Enough.

CASILDA (*to RUY BLAS*).

My lord,

Do you feel better now?

RUY BLAS.

I do.

THE QUEEN (*to her Ladies*).

Our guest restored,

Ladies, we will retire. As far as we can learn,

We must not cherish hope the King will yet return,

But will continue hunting. [*To the Pages.*] See to this young Count.

Conduct him to his chamber.

[*She retires with her suite to her apartment.*]

CASILDA (*watching THE QUEEN as she goes out*).

Yes; and ere I mount

To mine, I'd like to learn the secret of your soul.

[*Exit after THE QUEEN, taking the box of relics with her.*]

RUY BLAS *seems to listen with great delight to the last words of THE QUEEN, and appears to be in a kind of dreamy condition. He espies the piece of lace which THE QUEEN in her confusion let fall upon the carpet, and eagerly picks it up, covering it with kisses.*

RUY BLAS (*with upraised eyes*).

Oh, aid me, gracious Heaven, as I near the goal

Of my one hope, to keep my reason in its strength!—

This! in her bosom!—

[*He hides it in his breast. Enter DON GURITAN by the same door through which he had followed THE QUEEN.*]

[He walks slowly up to RUY BLAS without saying a word, and half draws his sword which he seems to measure with that of RUY BLAS. Being unequal, he sheaths it again. RUY BLAS watches his proceedings with astonishment.]

SCENE IV.

RUY BLAS, DON GURITAN.

DON GURITAN (*as he sheaths his sword*).

They shall be of equal length.

RUY BLAS.

Pray, sir, what may you mean?

DON GURITAN.

That in the year of grace
Sixteen and fifty, Alicante beheld my face —
A gallant deep in love. A rival, too, was there
Who tried his best to woo from me my lady fair:
He was a comely youth as proud as Lucifer,
But that availed him nothing, for I killed him, sir. —
[RUY BLAS seeks to interrupt him here, but GURITAN, with a gesture of impatience, continues.]
Then somewhat later on: the date that now I fix
Will fit into the year Sixteen and Sixty-six:
Gil, Count of Iscola — magnificent was he —
Stepped in betwixt my sweet Angelica and me.
A billet-doux, he tried to send her by his slave,
Grifel de Viserta, into my hands she gave.
The slave was killed by order — *I* the master slew. —

RUY BLAS.

Don Guritan! —

DON GURITAN (*continuing*).

In Eighty or in Eighty-two —
 Later however — I did think myself deceived
 By my then reigning Beauty; and, of course, believed
 I found her gallant in a truly handsome youth,
 One Tirso Gamonal. If I must speak the truth,
 His taste in dress was faultless; and it was the age
 When e'en one's mules were shod with gold: well, in my
 rage
 I killed him too —

RUY BLAS.

Excuse me, sir — What is your aim
 In this long prelude?

DON GURITAN.

That the sportsman marks his game
 Before he fells it; or, to make it even shorter,
 When we draw from a well, our only aim is water: —
 That without any doubt to-morrow morning's sun
 Will rise at four o'clock; and that a road doth run
 Behind a lonely chapel, and reveals a spot
 Most suitable to those whose blood, by nature hot,
 Occasion cools. Your name is Cæsar, so I hear,
 Don Guritan, Count Onaté's the one I bear.

RUY BLAS.

Enough, sir: you'll be met with.

[*During GURITAN'S last speech CASILDA has entered on tip-toe by the little door at the back, and heard what was said.*

CASILDA (*aside*).

What? — a duel? — So.
Of this choice meeting shall our Sovereign straightway
know!

[*She goes out by the same door.*]

DON GURITAN (*with the same coolness*).

For your instruction, sir, perhaps 't would be as well
If I just slightly on my thoughts and feelings dwell.
My tastes are few and moderate, but I dislike
Beyond all things, your man who thinks that he can
strike
With admiration all the fair sex: that he need
Just twirl his moustache, wink his eye, and straight
succeed!
Or, feeling ill from some mere scratch, lean on a chair
With graceful attitude, and thus attract the fair.

RUY BLAS.

I really fail to understand —

DON GURITAN.

Now, there you're wrong:
I know that you have understood me all along.
Tis the same lovely being both of us admire,
And to her good opinion both of us aspire: —
There's one of us too many in this palace, sir;
So now you plainly know to what I must refer.
I am the Major-domo; you the Chamber-groom;
But for the two of us I cannot find the room.
More ancient of the pair, I have, of course, the right
To judge between us; and, according to my light,
You must give way. To sit with you each day at mess,
And witness the huge appetite you must possess
For meat, and every kind of food, would ill agree

With my digestion ; and, in fact, would probably
 Unhinge me wholly — therefore as all competition
 Between us is beyond the merest supposition,
 Having the gout severely now and then, and being
 By no means yet a fool — I say that, all this seeing —
 As you are so attractive — yet not over-strong,
 Because you faint — I say I cannot now be wrong
 In killing you right off.

RUY BLAS.

You're welcome — *if you can.*

DON GURITAN.

That, Count, I must confess, is spoken like a man.
 And so precisely, as I think I said before,
 To-morrow morning at the early hour of four
 We meet, without a witness, in the lonely glen
 To cut each other's throats, like gallant gentlemen.
[He extends his hand, which RUY BLAS takes.]

RUY BLAS.

Of course, no word of this to any one ?

[DON GURITAN nods by way of assent.]

Farewell.

Until to-morrow.

[Exit RUY BLAS.]

DON GURITAN (*alone*).

Yes. His hand, e'en as it fell
 Into my own, was firm. He certainly will die,
 But he must be as brave — at least, as cool as I.
*[A key is turned in the lock of the door to THE QUEEN'S
 apartments. GURITAN turns round when he hears it.]*
 That door, I see, is opening.
*[THE QUEEN enters, and goes quickly up to DON GURITAN,
 who appears delighted to see her. She holds the box of
 relics in her hand.]*

SCENE V.

DON GURITAN, THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN (*with a smile*).

Ha! Don Guritan.

I want you! —

DON GURITAN (*delighted*).

Then, indeed, I am a happy man! —

THE QUEEN (*placing the box on the table near to her*).It is not much, my lord, from you that I require. [*Laughs*.

Casilda just now stated that, at my desire —

(You know what thoughtless beings all girls are) — that
you

Would anything — no matter what its nature — do

If I but wished it.

DON GURITAN.

She was right.

THE QUEEN.

Well, by my faith,

I doubted it.

DON GURITAN.

Then, madame, you were wrong.

THE QUEEN.

To death,

She said, my champion you would be.

DON GURITAN.

Casilda spoke

As I myself would speak. Yes, may I straightway choke

If every word's not true!

THE QUEEN.

Still, would not I the fact
Believe.

DON GURITAN.

Ah, let your Majesty tell me to act
In any way ; then see, and judge.

THE QUEEN.

You mean it ?

DON GURITAN.

Yes.

THE QUEEN.

Sure ?

DON GURITAN.

Sure !

THE QUEEN.

Well, swear to me that you 'll do nothing less
Than what I will command you.

DON GURITAN.

By my Patron Saint,
Most venerated, I 'll do all, without restraint,
Your Majesty may will.

THE QUEEN.

So far, then, it is good.
This box that you behold, of scented sandal-wood,
You 'll bear to Neubourg, to my father, with all speed —
At once you 'll go !

DON GURITAN (*aside*).

I 'm caught. [*Aloud.*] But, madame, is there need
For instantly departing ?

THE QUEEN.

Instantly, I say.

DON GURITAN.

Six hundred leagues! —

THE QUEEN.

Five hundred, Count, and fifty. Pray
Be careful with these lovely fringes. They might fade.

[*Pointing to the silken covering to the box.*]

DON GURITAN.

And must I go? —

THE QUEEN.

At once.

DON GURITAN.

To-morrow —

THE QUEEN.

No — we've made
Arrangements —

DON GURITAN (*aside*).Yes, I'm caught! [*Aloud.*] But —

THE QUEEN.

Go! —

DON GURITAN.

But —

THE QUEEN.

I've your word.

DON GURITAN.

A small affair —

THE QUEEN.

Impossible! —

DON GURITAN.

Let me be heard! —

THE QUEEN.

Quick! —

DON GURITAN.

Just one day —

THE QUEEN.

No! —

DON GURITAN.

If I —

THE QUEEN.

Not one single hour!

DON GURITAN.

I —

THE QUEEN.

No! —

DON GURITAN.

But! —

THE QUEEN.

Go! —

DON GURITAN.

If —

THE QUEEN.

I will kiss you! —

[*Throws her arms round his neck and kisses him.*]

DON GURITAN (*vexed and yet charmed*).

Oh, the power

Of that embrace! — Madame, I cannot choose but go.

THE QUEEN (*pointing to the window*).

A carriage waits you, Count, there, in the court below.

DON GURITAN (*aside*).

Whatever I may do, I sink beneath her level —

God became man, 't is true; but woman veils the devil!

She is prepared for all.

[Writes hastily on a paper ; rings, and gives it to a Page who enters.]

Page, hasten, as you live,
And to Don Cæsar de Bazan this missive give.

[Exit Page.]

This duel must be fought on my return.

[Aside ; then aloud to THE QUEEN.]

I bow

To your commands.

THE QUEEN.

'T is well.

[DON GURITAN takes the box from the table, kisses THE QUEEN'S hand, and goes out. Soon afterwards the sound of carriage wheels is heard in the courtyard below. THE QUEEN then falling into a fauteuil exclaims.]

He will not kill him now !



Champollon sc

ADRIEN. MOREAU

SCENE. — *A saloon in the King's Palace at Madrid, in which the Council of State holds its sittings. At the back are large double doors. A few steps lead up to them. In the angle on the left is a recess concealed by tapestry hangings, and at the back of the recess is a small door. On the right a window. Below it is a square table, covered with a green velvet cloth, on which are eight small desks. Round the table are eight stools, and at the side facing the spectator is a large fauteuil or throne, covered with cloth of gold and surmounted by a drapery of the same material. The arms of Spain are emblazoned on it. At the side of this throne is a chair.*

As the curtain rises the members of the King's Privy Council are standing about in groups, previous to taking their places at the table.



ACT III.

RUY BLAS.

SCENE I.

DON MANUEL ARIAS, *President of Castile*. DON PEDRO VELEZ DE GUEVARRA, COUNT DE CAMPOREAL, *Councillor de cape et d' épée de la Contaduria, Mayor*. DON FERNANDO DE CORDOVA Y. AGUILAR, MARQUIS DE PRIEGO, *same rank*. ANTONIO UBILLA, *Writer, Mayor to the Revenue*. MONTAZGO, *Robed Councillor of the Chamber of the Indies*. COVADENGA, *First Secretary of the Islands*. Several other Councillors; some in black robes and others in Court dresses. CAMPOREAL has the *Star of Calatrava* on his cloak; PRIEGO, the collar of the *Golden Fleece* round his neck.

DON MANUEL ARIAS and the COUNT CAMPOREAL talk together in a low tone at the front of the stage. The others stand about in groups here and there.

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

This sudden rise is somewhat of a mystery.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

It is, if one reflects on his past history.
His honours crowd upon him, and each day increase —
The last was the insignia of the Golden Fleece,
And Dukedom of Olmedo. Secretary, too —

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

All in six months!

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

There's more in this than is to you
Or me apparent.

DON MANUEL ARIAS (*mysteriously*).

Yes — the Queen.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

The King, in truth
Grows feebler every day, since wasted was his youth.
He lives in the Escorial, like as in the tomb
With his first wife. The present Queen, in her fresh
bloom,
Rules as she pleases —

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

Over *us*, my worthy sir —
But then the minister, Don Cæsar, rules o'er *her*.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

His mode of living is most strange. As to the Queen,
She and her minister are ne'er together seen.
One seems to shun the other. You'll say, 't is not so;

But, as for six months I have watched them, I must know.
 He's of a disposition absent and morose,
 And round about his solitary dwelling throws
 A barrier of mystery. Its doors close shut;
 Its windows closed and veiled; no living soul can put
 A foot within. Yet more, — his servants are two blacks,
 Both deaf and mute.

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

Mute, say you?

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

Yes; there nothing lacks
 To make the mystery complete. It would appear
 The other men attend upon his orders here.

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

All this is strange indeed.

ANTONIO UBILLA (*who has joined them*).

He's of a noble race,
 I hear.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

Stranger than all, — he'd show an honest face!
 [*To ARIAS.*] He's cousin — Santa Cruz has also pushed
 him on —
 To that same Marquis Sallust, only last year gone
 With such a crash. But this same Cæsar, I am told,
 Whom now as lord and master o'er us we behold,
 A few years back was such a thoughtless, crack-brained
 loon
 That those who knew him deemed him smitten by the
 moon!
 His gold, his jewels, — all his substance scattered he
 In wine, in women, and the wildest revelry.

Then, all at once he fell; and disappeared from sight,
E'en as the meteor from the wondering eye at night.

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

Years have, however, changed the fool into a sage.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

Loose women ever grow quite prudish in old age.

ANTONIO UBILLA.

I do believe him honest.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL (*laughing*).

Candidly you do,
Ubilla? Are you one of those so dazzled too?

[*Mysteriously.*

Stay now, and let me make a trifling calculation:
The household of her Majesty — drawn from the nation —
Costs every year in golden ducats, bright and new,
Six hundred, sixty and four thousand, with a few
Still over and above. Now here's an open sea
In which, I say, a clever fisherman is free
To cast a net.

MARQUIS DE PRIEGO (*joining them*).

Your pardon, but to me it seems
Your talk is much too free, and e'en upon it gleams
A moon-ray of imprudence. If you think it fit
"To bite the King, you first must kiss the favourite."
Thus said my grandsire once: so now my lords, with
leave,

We'll our attention to the public business give.

[*All place themselves at the table, and begin taking up pens
and turning over papers, but in a careless and indif-
ferent manner.*

MONTAZGO (*aside to UBILLA*).

Out of that relic money, if you recollect,
I asked that you would very privately direct
Payment into my nephew's hands for his lost post.

UBILLA (*aside to MONTAZGO*).

You promised me that in a few days, at the most,
My cousin Melchior should be Bailie of Ebro.

MONTAZGO (*aside*).

We've just endowed your daughter richly, as you know.
These applications are incessant.

UBILLA (*aside*).

Well, I'll make
Your nephew's matter right.

MONTAZGO.

And you may therefore take
The Bailieship for Melchior. [*They shake hands.*]

COVADENGA (*rising*).

Lords and Gentlemen;
Members of this most noble Council. Hear me when
I state the duties grave that we must here fulfil
With all our best ability and ready will.
The revenue of Spain, now in a hundred hands,
A crying grievance is, and therefore it commands
Our strict attention. Yes, 't is time we made an end
Of such a state of things. I say we should not lend
Ourselves to such abuses: giving to a few
Too much; giving others little. Ubilla, to you
The taxes on tobacco yield great gain. Priego,
You reap a wondrous harvest on your indigo.
Camporeal, on salt, on amber, and on jet,
And divers other articles your hand is set.

[To MONTAZGO.] You look upon me, lord, with most unquiet eyes;
 Need what I now am stating fill you with surprise?
 Yes, true it is that by your dexterous management
 From fines, lead, rosewood, arsenic, you receive a rent:
 Yet these few I have mentioned are not nearly all;
 I've nothing, — so to my share let a little fall.

CAMPOREAL (*laughing heartily*).

Oh, sly old devil! — he's best off, upon my soul!
 For of two islands he has got entire control.
 He holds Majorca with one talon, sharp and stiff;
 The other sticks into the Peak of Teneriffe.

COVADENGA (*excitedly*).

I say, I've nothing!

PRIEGO (*laughing*).

You have negroes!
 [*All rise and talk querulously together at same time.*]

MONTAZGO.

I think I
 Have most right to complain, and fancy much to try
 My fortune in some forests.

COVADENGA.

I'll give negroes up;
 Give me the arsenic!

[RUY BLAS *has entered unperceived, by the door at the back, and has heard the concluding altercation. He is dressed in black velvet with a scarlet mantle; a white plume in his cap, and the collar of the Golden Fleece round his neck. He listens for a few moments, and then advances into the midst of the Ministers in the height of their quarrel.*]

SCENE II.

*The same, RUY BLAS.*RUY BLAS (*looking round*).

Gentlemen, methinks you sup
With wondrous appetites!

[*Commotion among the Councillors, who all turn and pause in surprise and anxiety. RUY BLAS puts on his hat, folds his arms, and continues.*

O faithless Ministers!

In whom, alas! scarce one redeeming virtue stirs!
Is this the way in which your duty, then, is done?
You rob the house above you! Can you not be won
By shame from such a purpose?—Yes, you choose the
hour

In which Spain totters on her lofty height of power!
Though bitter tears she sheds, you callously behold,
Intent upon one aim,—to gorge yourselves with gold!
The edifice may crack—may crumble—so you say;
Your coffers once well filled, you can but haste away!
By me, then, be denounced, ye robbers of the tomb
In which your country lies—too early is her doom!

Again, I say, look round you; feel some little shame!
Spain yet hath virtue left, and an illustrious name!
Must both now perish? Yes, since the fourth Philip's
death

Brazil and Portugal, which once were great beneath
Our sway, with Brisach in Alsatia; and again
Roussillon, Ormuz, Goa, five thousand leagues of main,
And Pernambuco, the Blue Mountains,—all are gone
O'er which the once protecting shield of Spain was
thrown!

E'en from the boisterous north, to south and east and west,

Europe, that hates us, calls our sovereignty a jest,
Our King a phantom Monarch ! — England and Holland,
both,

The empire would divide : and Rome is nothing loath
To gull us : and in Piedmont — friendly though she is —
To risk an army's safety might be much amiss.

Savoy is full of dangers ; France but bides her hour,
And Austria watches. Then Bavaria's infant power
Is dying, as you know. As for the Viceroy — there
Medina, with love-scandals, fills his Naples fair.

Vaudemont sells Milan ; Leganez has Flanders lost —
What remedy ? for indigence now chills us, like a frost.

The State, of money and of troops around us drained,
Where once prosperity in its full glory reigned.

Upon the seas high Heaven her rising wrath has shown ;
And to three hundred vessels wrecked we now must own.

Yet you presume — my lords, reflect ! — in twenty years
The people ('t is no fancy, great as it appears,
Bearing upon their backs the too enormous charge
Of your most guilty pleasures, and which still enlarge
Upon them), — this down-trodden people, have out-doled,
Thus pressed, four hundred millions of their hard-earned
gold !

And yet 't is not enough ! For you I shrink with
shame !

About the country bands of men, without a name,
Roam in wild freedom, and around their sanguine track
Is desolation, murder, — ruins, still smouldering black,
Of many a homestead fair. By many a bush and bower
Gleams the lone cross, mark of the vile assassin's power.
As though 't were not sufficient Prince 'gainst Prince
should war ;

E'en convents must pick quarrels ; provinces must jar :—

Each petty hand is raised against his neighbour's life,
And the whole country teems with sanguinary strife! —
The Church itself is tottering on the very brink
Of threat'ning ruin; and from its once-loved portals
shrink

Not few that worshipped there. Intrigue is paramount.
And loyalty is sapped, yea, at its very fount!
Spain open lies, e'en like a foul and reeking sewer,
And into it all nations pour what's most impure.
Each Noble has his wage; and greedily his hand
To those is stretched who can base services command,
No matter in what tongue! — Babel reigns in Madrid!
And Genoese, Sardinians, Flemings, all can bid! —
The Alguazil, e'er to the poor man hard and stern,
Does to the wealthy one with smiles obsequious turn.
Upon Toledo Bridge I have been robbed myself;
And one half of Madrid looks for the other's pelf.
Our Judges can be bribed. Our soldiers, who once
hurled

Spain's mighty thunderbolts, and vanquished half the
world,

Are all unpaid. Six thousand meagre, half-starved men,
Jews, mountaineers and vagabonds, from every den
Of infamy, strut in their ranks, and wear a sword
And knife; which, when night's friendly shelter doth
afford

The welcome chance, transforms each soldier to a thief,
And havoc is abroad! Matalobos, the chief
Of brigands, boasts more men than could a Duke or
Prince.

A robber wars upon the King! and few evince
Respect for him, alas! The peasants e'en insult
His passing carriage; and the now untoward result
Is manifest in your fear-stricken, mourning King,
Who, in his palace shut, can hear the death-knell ring

Of what was once a mighty empire ! Listen ye
 Who calmly sit, and all this broadcast ruin see —
 Crushed is the Lion ! Europe bruises with its heel
 The prostrate giant, — him who once was clothed in steel,
 And robed in purple, but whose rags now barely hide
 The gaping wounds that bleed, and show on every side !
 I say, this fall accomplished, I behold ye still
 Disputing o'er the remnants with an eager will !

Wake, Charles the Fifth ! thou mighty conqueror,
 awake !

Spain calls aloud on *thee* thy deep repose to break ! —
 What dost thou in the tomb ? when into pieces falls
 The towering fabric of thy greatness ! — Yes, Spain calls
 Aloud for aid ! This empire, reared by thine own hands,
 Sinks fast, and on the verge of dissolution stands !
 That all resplendent globe, that erst was held by thee —
 Fit emblem of thy far extending sovereignty —
 And in thy left hand shone so that the world believed
 That from Madrid the rising sunlight they received,
 Now like a fading star, or waning moon, is seen
 That o'er the shaded earth doth feebly, faintly lean.
 Alas ! thy proud inheritance is wasting fast,
 And, melted into gold, into base hands is cast !
 Thy splendours tarnishing, O giant ! canst thou sleep,
 And see deformed dwarfs around thy sceptre creep
 To break it into pieces ; and that mighty bird —
 Thine eagle dread, of whom the world so oft hath heard,
 When on its conquering way 'mid flames and thunders
 dire —

Plumeless, sink into what is now a funeral pyre !

[*The Councillors remain silent in consternation. The MARQUIS DE PRIEGO and the COUNT DE CAMPOREAL alone raise their heads, and wrathfully regard RUY BLAS. CAMPOREAL at length whispers to PRIEGO ; goes up to the table, writes a few hasty lines on a sheet of paper, which he and the MARQUIS sign.*

CAMPOREAL (*giving the paper to RUY BLAS*).
 Lord Duke, our resignation in your hands I place.

RUY BLAS.

I thank your Lordship. To the cradle of your race
 In old Castile you will retire. Lord Marquis, you
 To Andalusia will proceed to-morrow, too.
[The two Lords proudly retire, having first put on their hats. RUY BLAS then turns, and addresses those who remain.]

Each one who sees not fit to follow in my path,
 To take the course he's chosen full permission hath.
[A pause. RUY BLAS seats himself in the chair beside the throne, and busies himself with the correspondence, opening letters, etc. Whilst he is thus occupied, COVADENGA, ARIAS, and UBILLA talk together in an undertone.]

UBILLA (*to COVADENGA, indicating RUY BLAS*).
 We have our master here. This man will yet be great.

ARIAS.

If he has time to be so.

COVADENGA.

Yes; and time to wait.
 He might be Richelieu.

ARIAS.

Or Olivarez!—

RUY BLAS (*after reading a letter, aloud*).

Hum!

A plot! The perils I foresaw, then, thus are come
 To pass! Listen, my lords! *[Reads.]* "Duke of Olmedo,
 keep

Your ears and eyes wide open. Should you chance to sleep

A lofty personage will vanish from Madrid."

Aha! so far, then, I will do as I am bid,

And keep a watch. The letter is anonymous.

[*A HUISSIER approaches RUY BLAS with a low bow.*
What now?

HUISSIER.

The Ambassador of France waits to discuss
Some matters with your Grace.

RUY BLAS.

Ha! — D'Harcourt — tell him soon;
I'm occupied at present.

HUISSIER (*again bowing*).

In the grand saloon
The imperial Nuncio waits your Excellency's pleasure.

RUY BLAS.

Tell him it is impossible; I'm not at leisure.

[*HUISSIER bows, and retires. A PAGE, in scarlet livery with silver braiding, enters and approaches RUY BLAS.*

My faithful Page, tell all who chance to ask for me
I am not visible.

PAGE.

There's one who fain would see
Your Grace: Don Guritan, returned from Neubourg.

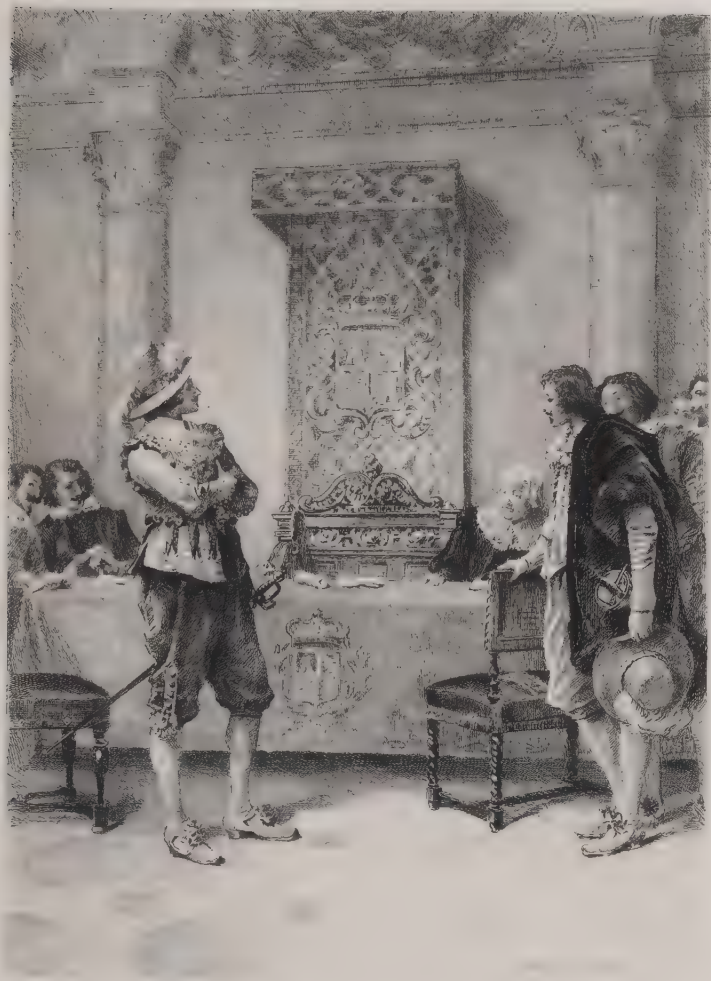
RUY BLAS.

So! —

Don Guritan returned! — You'll tell him how to go

Up to my private house, to-morrow, my good Page.

Retire. [*Exit PAGE. RUY BLAS to the Councillors.*



James Morrell del.

E. Champollion sc.

Grave matters our attention will engage :
Seek me within two hours, my lords.

[*All retire, bowing profoundly to RUY BLAS. When alone, he walks forward plunged in a deep reverie. Suddenly at the angle of the saloon the tapestry is pushed aside, and THE QUEEN appears at the opening. A joyful expression lights up her countenance. She is dressed in a white robe, and the crown is upon her head. RUY BLAS turns, and seems petrified by this apparition.*

SCENE III.

RUY BLAS, THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN (*at the back*).

Oh, thanks !

RUY BLAS (*starting*).

The Queen !

THE QUEEN.

I could no longer, Duke, remain behind this screen.
Your noble, loyal speech, my grateful thanks command,
And warmly must I grasp that truly faithful hand !
[*Walks hastily up to him, and takes his hand before he can prevent it.*

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

For six months I've avoided her — and now to fall
Across her thus ! — madame — you there ?

THE QUEEN.

Yes ; I heard all.

With my whole soul I listened !

RUY BLAS.

Ne'er did I suspect
Your presence in there, madame.

THE QUEEN.

No one would expect
A listener, Duke. That Privy Councils might be heard
Unseen by him, the late King Philip (known as third)
Had the nook made. The present King has, too, been
there,
And listening, he has heard his treacherous Council
share
His plundered States between them.

RUY BLAS.

Did he nothing say?

THE QUEEN.

No, nothing.

RUY BLAS.

Nothing do?

THE QUEEN.

No; but he turned away
And mournfully resumed his hunting. Ah, to-day
You treated those false men as richly they deserved;
Grandly you spoke; and, when I peeped, I well observed
The flashing lightning of your eyes upon them turned
As the fast flowing words the shrinking traitors burned.
Whence comes this wondrous knowledge of effect and
cause
That shines in your discourse? Kings could not lay
down laws
With more convincing argument: — not Gods above
Appear more terrible! —

RUY BLAS.

It springs alone from love, —
 Love of your matchless self. The ruin that they call
 Down on the State, I know, I feel, must also fall
 Upon your head. Yes; to avert destruction hurled
 Against you, in my ardour I would save the world!
 I am a wretched man, whose deep-felt love for you
 Has become soul-absorbing. With each day it grew;
 And now, e'en as the blind for glowing sunlight pine,
 I yearn, I crave, for what, alas! can ne'er be mine.
 Oh, listen, madame! I have had the brightest dreams
 E'en in my depth of darkness; and their cheering beams
 Consoled me from afar. I dared not e'en to place
 My finger near to yours, but I could see your face
 Dazzle me, like an angel's! — I have suffered long,
 And for six months have stifled with an effort strong
 The flame that burned within. — I shunned you every-
 where,
 For it was pain to me to breathe the self-same air
 And yet not speak. Oh, madame, dare I now give vent
 To that so long within my tortured bosom pent?
 Dare I my passion to your Majesty confess?
 Tell me to die, and both the hour and hand I'll bless
 That dooms me! Die! — Fear chills my heart. —
 Oh, pardon me!

THE QUEEN.

With ravishment I hear, with ravishment I see!
 No, never yet such words have sounded in my ears;
 Thy soul is thrilling in thy voice, and me it bears
 Joyfully with it! Yes, I long to hear thy voice,
 To see thine eyes so eloquently say, "Rejoice!" —
 But I have suffered also; six months past have been
 Torture itself — because you shunned me, — me, your
 queen! —
 Oh, I have said too much!

RUY BLAS.

Nay, graciously give breath
To more enchanting words!

THE QUEEN (*after a struggle*).

Yes, though it be e'en death
To my torn heart, I must tell all! [*With upraised eyes.*
Oh, is't a crime

Thus to unfold the truth one would conceal? Long
time —

That long six months — you fled from me, and I pursued.
Each day within that secret cabinet I stood
And listened anxiously to catch the calm, full flow
Of your tongue's eloquence. And how my heart would
glow

With pride at those wise words; I recognized the ring
Of the true metal there that constitutes a king, —
A master over men! Yes, truly it is I
Who placed you where you are, who bade you climb
thus high!

Heaven failed to raise you, but it is a woman's hand
That leads to where a king should rule the troubled land.
Ah, aught that touches *me* receives at once thy care, —
A flower before, now empire claims those talents rare.
I saw thee simply good, and now I see thee great.
Just Heaven! if I've done wrong, full bitter is my fate
To be thus here immured, as though 't were in a tomb,
Without or love or hope, — such is my present doom.
One day, if circumstance so favours, and the spot,
I'll tell thee how I've suffered, how I'm left, forgot, —
Humiliated too, at every turn. Judge, then.
But yesterday my chamber was displeasing: when
I sought to change it, I was insolently told
I could not do so! Yes, in me a slave behold.
Such are the bolts and bars of courtly etiquette



Surrounding me. Yes, Duke, 't is Heaven, I feel, has set
Thee here to save the State that trembles on the brink
Of ruin,—the people, too, oppressed. Thou wilt not
shrink
From this great task, but thou wilt aid, and love me
too, —
Me, miserable — suffering —

RUY BLAS (*falling on his knees*).

Madame —

THE QUEEN (*gravely*).

To you

I give my soul. Queen though I be o'er all the rest,
It is a *woman's* heart that throbs within my breast.
Yes, Duke, I'm yours. My faith in you is great and
strong,
And tells me that my honour cannot suffer wrong.
Call me, and I will come. O Cæsar! in this brain
True genius sits enthroned, and nobly doth she reign.
Adieu!

[*Kisses his forehead : returns to the recess and exit.*

SCENE IV.

RUY BLAS, *alone*.

RUY BLAS (*rising from his knees wrapped in ecstatic
contemplation*).

Yes, Heaven seems opening wide before my eyes!
The first hour of my life is *now*. There doth arise
Around me such a flood of pure and glorious light, —
Like views of paradise, intolerably bright,

We sometimes see in visions. Joy — yea, ecstasy —
 Commingling with high pride, give a divinity
 To every feeling, and proclaim it pure, true love,
 Such as is ever flowing in the realms above !
 To be belov'd of her, — the Queen ! 'T is true — yes !
 yes !

I'm greater than the king, for she must love him less
 Than she loves me. The thought is dazzling ! Van-
 quisher
 Of Spain, Duke of Olmedo, and the heart of her
 Who reigns, — that angel who has made me more than
 man !

Do I move, living, since this star-lit dream began ?
 It is indeed no dream. She spoke the rapturous word ;
 'T was plainly spoken, and as plainly was it heard.
 I saw her there. Upon her head the diadem,
 Small, flashing (as she spoke) with variegated gem,
 Caught my eye ; and the chiselled bracelet on her wrist,
 I saw that too. She trusts to me ! Could I resist
 That one appeal ? Sweet angel ! Heaven, it is said,
 Gave love to man in order that he might be led
 To be both great and gentle. I, who now shall fear —
 Dowered with her affection — nothing far or near ;
 I, who by her assistance, am in all supreme ;
 I, who, heart-proud, would scarce a monarch's power
 deem

Equal to mine, — before high Heaven I here declare
 That my sweet Queen in loyal safety I will bear
 Through every danger that may threaten. Let her lean
 As *woman* on my breast, and on my arm as *Queen* !
 Yes, let her every lingering fear or doubt allay ;
 My love, and my devotion, are her own.

*[Some moments ago a man has entered by the door at
 the back, enveloped in a long cloak, and wearing a hat
 garnished with silver ornaments. He has slowly walked*

up to RUY BLAS without being seen by him, and at the moment that he in ecstasy raises his eyes to heaven, the man suddenly places his hand on RUY BLAS'S shoulder, who turns as if just awakened. The man then drops his cloak and DON SALLUST is revealed. He is dressed in the same kind of scarlet livery as that worn by the Page who attends on RUY BLAS.

SCENE V.

RUY BLAS, DON SALLUST.

DON SALLUST (*his hand on RUY BLAS'S shoulder*).

Good-day.

RUY BLAS (*aside, astonished*).

Great heaven! I am lost! the Marquis!

DON SALLUST (*smiling*).

Ha! I'll bet

It was not in your thoughts to see me here just yet.

RUY BLAS.

Your lordship has in truth surprised me.

[*Aside.*

Woe and fears

Return. The angel gone — the demon reappears!

[*Goes hastily to cabinet in recess, bolts the door behind the tapestry, and tremblingly returns to DON SALLUST.*

DON SALLUST.

Well, and how fare you?

RUY BLAS (*greatly agitated, with eyes fixed upon SALLUST*).

My good lord — that livery —

DON SALLUST (*in a cold, hard tone ; still smiling*).

I had to pass in through the palace gates, you see ;
And with this habit on, one's free in here to roam.
Besides, it's to my taste ; in it I feel at home.

[*Puts on his hat ; but RUY BLAS remains, as before, bare-headed.*

RUY BLAS.

I fear for you —

DON SALLUST.

Fear, do you ? That's a silly word.

RUY BLAS.

You are an exile ! —

DON SALLUST.

Well — but fear is quite absurd.

RUY BLAS.

Should you be recognized by daylight in the palace —

DON SALLUST.

Court gallants, 't is well known, are careless, light, and
callous
Of all but their own pleasure. Would they stir one pace,
Think you, to stare into a passing stranger's face ?
Especially that of a lackey ?

[*Sits in a chair ; RUY BLAS still standing.*

Apropos,

What's doing in Madrid ? Of course, I'd like to know.
Is't true that, burning with an hyperbolic zeal
For that fine article that's called "the public weal,"
You've exiled dear Priego ? Can you have forgot
He is your own relation ? You remember not
His mother was a Sandoval ? — yours too ? The devil !
In the result of this there may arise much evil.

You should be careful, friend. The wolf that yearns to
sup,
Considers ere he eats his wolfish brother up.
It was ill done.

RUY BLAS (*somewhat reassured*).

Nay, if your lordship will permit,
The facts for special notice I can now submit : —
That Don Priego, as a noble of the King,
Sought to increase expenditure, — a most wrong thing ;
For early we must put an army in the field,
Though short of money : then Bavaria's fate is sealed,
Or will be soon. But yesterday Count Harrach, he
You know full well, in confidence —

DON SALLUST.

It seems to me
The air is cold. Oblige, and close the window, sir.
[RUY BLAS, *pale with shame and despair, hesitates a moment ; then, with an effort, goes slowly to the window, which he closes.* DON SALLUST, *still seated, watches him with a careless air.*

RUY BLAS (*resuming and endeavouring to convince SALLUST*).

From what I've told your lordship, you will now infer
That war would be disastrous with our funds thus low.
With empty coffers, what are we to do ? You know
That in our hands our country's welfare solely rests,
And therefore that one hope should stir within our
breasts —

DON SALLUST (*interrupting, and pointing to his handkerchief which had fallen on the floor when he entered*).

Excuse me, but my handkerchief lies there.

[RUY BLAS, *apparently tortured by his feelings, again hesitates, but at last stoops, picks it up, and gives it to SALLUST, who puts it into his pocket.*

You said —

RUY BLAS (*with effort*).

That shortly into war the nation might be led.
 She must be rescued: this, our great and noble Spain
 Should not before her rulers plead for aid in vain.
 Let us awaken then, and undertake the task,
 Intrigue condemn, and from all traitors tear the mask!

DON SALLUST (*with an indifferent air*).

Now, this is not the path to walk upon at all.
 Your language, whilst pedantic, argues genius small.
 Why make so great a stir, — ay, such a furious clatter
 O'er what is, after all, a very simple matter?
 Suppose a dirty million's more than half devoured?
 To make a mischief of it *you* are not empowered.
 Lords are not peasants, and must live e'en as they please, —
 Freely and largely, as becomes the high degrees
 They hold. 'T is fine to talk about abuses thus;
 But to become redresser is ridiculous.
 To be forever boiling o'er with virtuous rage
 Is simply monstrous, and unsuited to your age.
 You would be popular, perchance, among the cits, —
 The drapers, hosiers — bah! I say employ your wits
 To better purpose. Seek some fresh and new caprice
 That will command attention, and your gains increase.
 The public interest! Think of your own, I say.
 About Spain's safety all your kindly fears allay;
 And as for virtue, faith, integrity, — they are
 About the same as when great Charles the Fifth made
 war.

You were not born a fool; so, by your leave, I'll cure
 This pathos, which is somewhat painful to endure;

'T is like the paper bag a child fills up with care,
To burst with loud report, and rush of empty air.

RUY BLAS.

And yet, my lord —

DON SALLUST (*with a cold smile*).

You really are astonishing!
I would converse upon a far more serious thing.

[*In a dry, imperious tone of voice.*

To-morrow morning here you'll all your service waive,
And wait me at the house that to your care I gave.
The business I've in hand has almost touched its end,
So mind the mutes alone to orders do attend.
Within the garden, and beneath its deepest shade,
Arrangements for a carriage must with care be made,
Horsed for a journey. See to this. Gold I'll provide.

RUY BLAS.

My lord, your wishes shall in nothing be denied.
But swear to me, beforehand, that in this affair
The Queen is not concerned?

DON SALLUST (*who is playing on the table with an ivory
paper-knife, suddenly turns to him*).

What need have you to care?

RUY BLAS (*trembling, and gazing on him with fear*).

Oh, fearful, dangerous man! Why must you thus com-
mand?

I feel myself dragged onward by an iron hand!
And a gulf yawns invisible, intensely dark
Before me! Some black project's here! Have you no
spark

Of pity left for me? Perchance you know it not —
I love this woman!

DON SALLUST (*coldly*).
Well — perhaps I knew it.

RUY BLAS.

What!

You knew it?

DON SALLUST.

After all, what does it signify?

RUY BLAS (*leaning against the wall for support, and speaking as it were to himself*).

What does it signify? Oh, nothing — nothing. I
Am but the victim of a torture worse than death!
That I should be a witness, e'en with my last breath,
To such a foul adventure! Spare me, Heaven! Spare
Mine eyes the sight!

DON SALLUST.

Eh? Well, is it so hard to bear?

I think you must be raving. Really, my young master,
You do your best to make of this a great disaster.
I have an end in view which I alone must know, —
A happy one for you, as time will amply show.
This I have told you. I advance. If you obey,
To certain happiness you are upon the way.
And, after all, what are Love's temporary woes? —
Ephemora, which everybody tastes and knows.
Learn that there is the question of an empire here;
Then what comparison can private feelings bear?
I could tell all I know; but what might be the good,
If I must ever be by you misunderstood.
Show your good sense in so far that you comprehend
Your status as a lackey. If I'm not a friend,
I'm a kind master; and I must be also free
To use my servant as may suit my fantasy.
You I transformed into a temporary lord

Because a certain service you could me afford.
 That once performed — deem it a doom or not a doom —
 Your lackey's livery you once more reassume,
 Should I so will. If you have gained the sovereign's
 heart,
 You have obeyed instructions, and have done your part.
 I'm satisfied. Be reasonable, be content.

RUY BLAS (*who has-listened as if unable to believe his ears*).
 Just Heaven! for what crime is this the chastisement?
 What have I done, O Father, ever great and pure,
 That all this depth of misery I must endure?
 Involuntarily must then my eyes behold
 That victim innocent in agony untold?
 My lord, you plunge me deep into a black abyss, —
 For your relentless course amounts indeed to this, —
 And all for what? — To satisfy a vengeance dire!

[*Speaking to himself.*]

Yes, 't is revenge alone that can his acts inspire, —
 Revenge against the Queen! Oh, cruel fate! And must
 I, in her eyes, become an object of disgust, —
 A vagabond, a villain with a double face,
 A perjured hound, dishonouring both name and race?
 I shall go mad! With thickening horrors thus sur-
 rounded,

Reason seems tottering — is clouded and confounded.

[*He pauses, and then goes on dreamily.*]

O Heaven! can it be that such foul things are done?
 Construct what will not bear the fierce light of the sun
 Upon it. Arm it with innumerable wheels
 To crush and grind out that which every being feels
 Is the heart's life-blood! Throw a livery over it;
 Set it in motion; and then watch as bit by bit [dirt,
 The mangled shreds appear, all splashed with blood and
 Yet shiver not, — 't was but a groom the livery girl!

[*Turning again to SALLUST.*]

But still there's time! Lord, feel some little pity yet!
Before the cruel wheels are in full motion set!

[Throwing himself at SALLUST's feet.

Take pity now on me! Take pity, too, on her!
I'm faithful, as you know. I'll serve without demur —
But take compassion on us!

DON SALLUST.

Really, this man never
Will comprehend, but thus seems doomed to plague me
ever.
This is most wearisome!

RUY BLAS.

My lord —

DON SALLUST.

Enough, sir! Tut!

[Rises and walks to the window.

'Tis very clear this window was not closely shut.
I feel there is a draught.

[Examines window and pulls it closer.

RUY BLAS (*aside, rising*).

I will not longer strain
My power of endurance. *[Aloud.]* I'm a grandee of
Spain,
Duke of Olmedo. From beneath the crushing tread
Of your too haughty foot, I proudly raise my head!

DON SALLUST.

What did you say? Repeat that very lofty phrase!
Ruy Blas, Duke of Olmedo? You would proudly raise
Your head? There is a bandage o'er your eyes, good
man;
Olmedo was conferred on Cæsar of Bazan!

RUY BLAS.

I will arrest you!

DON SALLUST.

Straightway then will I disclose
Your real character.

RUY BLAS.

But —

DON SALLUST.

If to the world it goes,
The bubble bursts! I've weighed, I've calculated all
The chances; so now judge which of our heads must
fall.
You triumph just too early.

RUY BLAS.

I'll deny the whole!

DON SALLUST.

Come, this is childish!

RUY BLAS.

You've no proof!

DON SALLUST.

I can unroll
One that will quite suffice. Your memory is short,
Or you would not be quite so ready to retort
As you are now. You are the glove. I am the hand.
[*In a lower voice, and approaching nearer to him.*]
If you obey me not, — please plainly understand, —
And are not at the house, prepared to fully aid
In what takes place; if by your lips there is betrayed
A syllable that its success might compromise, —
She, for whose sake your fears are now so quick to rise,
Shall be forever lost, and publicly defamed
When once your origin to all the world is named.

A certain paper, too, that under lock and key
 I keep securely by me, she shall straightway see.
 When that was written you must plainly recollect,
 And how the same was signed, if you will just reflect.
 The wording of it is as follows : — "I, Ruy Blas,
 The lackey to Monseigneur, Marquis of Finlas,
 Will faithfully, on all occasions, at command,
 Obey his orders. Witness here, this day, my hand."

RUY BLAS (*overcome, in a half-stifled voice*).

I'll do your will, my lord, without word or rebuke.
 [*The door at the back opens, and Councillors slowly file in.*]

DON SALLUST (*hastily wrapping his cloak round him*).

Footsteps approach.

[*Bowing profoundly.*]

I am your humble servant, Duke.



Charnollon sc

SCENE.—*A small chamber sumptuous and sombre. Fixtures and furniture old-fashioned and gilded, but faded. The walls are covered with crimson velvet hangings, likewise old and faded. Behind the fauteuils run verticle bands of gold lace. At the back are folding doors. On the left a large sculptured fireplace of the time of Philip II. with escutcheons at the back. On the opposite side, in a recess, a little door leading into a dark cabinet. A single window on the left, placed very high up, barred and crossed-barred, as in a prison. On the walls are some old and smoke-begrimed portraits which are scarcely visible from the dirt, etc., upon them. A wardrobe chest with a Venetian mirror. Large fauteuils of the time of Philip III. A richly ornamented cupboard against the wall. A small round table with gilded claws, in one corner. It is morning.*

As the curtain rises, RUY BLAS, dressed in black, without a cloak, and without the collar of the Golden Fleece, walks up and down in an agitated manner. At the back stands his PAGE motionless, and apparently awaiting his orders.



ACT IV.

RUY BLAS.

SCENE I.

RUY BLAS, THE PAGE.

RUY BLAS (*aside and to himself*).

She must be saved from him! No matter what befall, —
Ay, even if my brains should stain the very wall!
If the foul gibbet owned me, e'en if hell should gape,
She *must* be saved! Alas! how can I hope to shape
My plans so that success is sure. My heart — my
blood —
My soul! I'd give them all, could they but work her
good!

But, then, this plot — how thwart it? That's the problem*now!

Reflect — reflect — how that remorseless man could sow
The baneful seeds that grow and ripen into fruit.
He comes, he disappears, and will again pollute
The air with his most hateful presence. When I think
That prayerfully for her I did before him sink,
I deem myself a grovelling coward! After all,
What is he but a bold, bad man? When I recall
His words, the end he has in view quite plain appears:
To seize his prey, — the Queen! — and work upon her
fears,

Then hand her broken-hearted, powerless, to his groom!
This is the aim; but can it, shall it be her doom?
Yet I who caused her fall, must save her, be the price
However weighty, — yea, my life! if 't will suffice;
She must be saved! And how will that arch-traitor gain
His most pernicious ends? How will he here obtain
Admission? By what unthought, secret trap or door
Will he glide in, and tread, perchance, this very floor?
He's master of the house, as over me: the keys
Are in his hands, to use whenever he may please
To come, or go — whether it be by day or night —
And trample on my heart, and crush almost the light
Of reason from my brain. Oh, yes; I must be mad!
By passion's whirlwind seized, — now cheered awhile;
now sad

E'en to despair! My reason, like the oak-tree, bends
Almost to breaking 'neath the sweeping blast that rends
And fiercely scatters! Let me ponder well once more.
She must not leave the palace. If she passes o'er
The threshold, all is lost! 'T is here the trap is laid, —
Laid to ensnare her! Oh, around all's dark, — all made
As treacherous as art can make it. She must not
By any means approach this truly hateful spot, —

Not even leave the palace. Warning I must send
At once to her : but how ?

[He pauses in painful thought : then, as if an idea had suddenly struck him with a ray of hope, he raises his head.]

Yes — yes ! he will befriend
The Queen ! — Don Guritan ! He is a loyal man ;
He loves her too.

[Makes a sign to the PAGE, who approaches.]

Go, Page, with all the speed you can.
And seek Don Guritan. Beg him he will excuse
The trouble I am giving, but that he will use
Instant despatch to see the Queen, and in my name,
As in his own (our interest is in this the same),
Implore her not to leave the palace for three days,
Howe'er she may be urged by others. Fly ! Delays
Must not be dreamt of. *[Recalling PAGE who was going.]*
Stay ! *[Writes on his tablets hastily.]*

Be sure you give him this :
“ Believe, Don Guritan ; and take it not amiss.”
[Folds the paper, and gives it to the PAGE.]

As to this duel, tell him I confess I'm wrong —
I'm at his feet ; but that just now my troubles throng
So fast upon me that I am o'erwhelm'd. Beseech
That with her Majesty he will have instant speech,
As she's in utmost peril. Pray her not to move
For full three days. Now get thee hence, and straight-
way prove
Thou hast discretion in thee.

PAGE.

Trust me ; your command
I duly will fulfil.

RUY BLAS.

You fully understand
That which you have to do ?

PAGE.

Ay, truly, my good lord,
E'en to the letter. *[Exit PAGE hurriedly.]*

RUY BLAS (*sinking into a fauteuil*).

Yes ; his mission doth afford
To my excited, o'erwrought mind some slight repose.
And yet to calmness vainly could I now compose
My flickering spirits. Ah, I've ta'en the only course
That's possible. Don Guritan — Now what resource
Is left to me ? To wait Don Sallust ? Why ? No —
no —

'T will paralyze him for one day at least — I'll go,
And in some church will pray that Heaven may inspire
A way through this deep gloom.

*[He rises ; takes his hat, which is near at hand, and rings
a small bell which is upon the table. Two Negroes,
dressed in light green velvet, with jackets of the same
embroidered with gold, appear at the door at the back.]*

From hence I now retire.

A man may shortly come, by some way to him known,
And you will act as if the house were all his own.
Do as he orders ; and if others follow —

[Hesitates a moment.]

Why,

Let them do likewise as they please.

*[On a sign which he makes, the Negroes retire, after bowing
in token of obedience to his wishes. RUY BLAS goes out,
and as the door closes behind him, a great uproar is
heard in the large chimney, from which a man suddenly
falls enveloped in a large ragged cloak. It is DON
CÆSAR DE BAZAN.]*



Dessiné par G. Jacquet

Photographie Goupil & C^{ie}

SCENE II.

DON CÆSAR (*out of breath, giddy, astonished, and with an expression of jollity and yet anxiety*).

Quite true ! 'Tis I !

[*Having fallen on his hands and knees, he rises, rubbing his right knee, bowing very low, and advancing into the room.*

I beg your pardon. Pray don't notice the intrusion. I hope, indeed, I have not caused the least confusion By my abrupt arrival. I should really grieve —

[*Reaches the middle of the room, and then perceives that he is alone in it.*

There's no one here who can a gentleman receive !
And yet, when to the tiles I made my upward climb
I thought I heard some voices. Humph ! 'tis well ;
meantime

A little solitude is pleasing.

[*Throws himself into a fauteuil.*

Well, it seems

Events are thickening. I am like a dog that streams
After his bath, and shakes himself ; astonishment
Half blinds me. First of all, those Alguazils were sent
To seize and ship me off ; then followed the corsairs,
Whose stripes, in yon big town, methinks my back still
bears :

And then the yellow woman who my virtue tried ;
Then my escape, and then my journeys far and wide,
And my return to Spain. The very day I land
I find by Alguazils that I'm still in demand ;
Another headlong flight. I jump a wall. A tree
I climb, near to a lonely house ; I then make free
To seek, unseen, its roof. With gratitude next swelling,

I roughly sink into the bosom of the dwelling,
 E'en by the chimney's aid ! It scarce my tumble broke,
 And has too roughly tampered with my last new cloak !
 That Sallust is a most unmitigated brute.

[Rises and examines himself in the mirror of the wardrobe.
 My doublet, likewise, suffered by that chimney shoot.

[Takes off his cloak and examines his rose-coloured satin
doublet, which is torn and patched in several places.

He then suddenly rubs his knee again, at the same time
looking towards the fireplace.

My leg most devilishly reminds me of that fall !

[He opens a drawer in the wardrobe, and in it finds a
green velvet cloak embroidered with gold, which is the
one given by SALLUST to RUY BLAS.

This cloak appears to me the better, after all.

[Throws the cloak over his shoulders, and puts his ragged
one in the drawer, after folding it carefully. He puts
his hat in also, which he forces down with a blow of
his fist, and shuts the drawer. He then walks proudly
about in his new cloak.

All right ; I'm clothed anew. So far, indeed, so well.

My worthy cousin, 't was your wish I should not dwell

In Spain, but that I should inhabit Africa.

There man is like a mouse beside a tiger. Bah !

I'll be revenged on you, — most damnably, I will !

Just let me get some dinner, be it half a fill ;

Then on you I will launch my creditors in full,

And they shall haunt you, bait you, as we bait a bull.

[In a corner of the room he notices a magnificent pair of
half-boots ornamented with lace ; he immediately kicks
off his own and draws them on.

Let me examine now this most mysterious place.

[After having looked all round him.

There's something here, indeed, reminds me of his face.

This window strongly barred, closed doors, and dungeon
 gloom

Unpleasantly suggest a prototype, — the tomb !
 Or else a bottle, where wine enters at the top. [Sighs.
 Ah, wine ! what consolation —

[Enters cabinet, and then returns with gestures of surprise.

Humph ! a pretty stop

To my investigation. Not an outlet here.

[Goes to doors at the back, opens them, looks out, then closes
 them, and returns to the front of the stage.

Not a soul visible. Well, plainly I am clear
 Of those sweet Alguazils ; but, in the devil's name,
 Where have I got to ? Yet to me 't is all the same ;
 Why should I plague myself to either fear or wonder ?
 If people come, of course, I 've made a little blunder
 In getting here — that's all. Yes ; as I said, 't is good
 To taste a trifle, now and then, of solitude ;
 But this is wearisome. [Sits, and yawns violently.

Aha ! what's this I see ?

[Starts up again, and examines a small cupboard let into
 the wall near the corner of the recess on the right.

'T is not unlike some studious book-worm's library.

[Opens it, and discovers it to be a well-stocked larder.

Upon my life ! a larder ! — chicken, pasties, ham,
 Wine nicely ranged in bottles ! In luck's way I am
 To have dropped here, then, after all !

[Examines the bottles one after the other.

There's quite a choice.

Bravo ! now let me o'er the sparkling cheer rejoice.

[He brings the little table from the corner where it stands,
 and loads it with all that the cupboard contains — bot-
 tles, plates, dishes, etc. He then takes up one of the
 bottles.

First let me read this label. 'T is a noble work [Drinks.
 By that same luminary that doth rarely lurk
 Behind a cloud, — "Xerès des Chevaliers." That's good !
 To all true cavaliers it is both drink and food !

[*Sits at table, and drinks again.*

Where is the book, I say, composed by human brains
In which such genuine, true, and sparkling spirit reigns?
Ah, how consoling! [*Drinks again.*] Now I'll eat.

[*Cuts into the pasty.*

Dogs! Alguazils!

With exultation every fibre in me thrills!

I have escaped you! [*Eating.*] Ah, this pasty is a
king!

And when the master comes I will its praises sing.

[*Rises, goes to cupboard and brings out another knife, fork,
and plate, which he places on the table opposite his
own. Sits again.*

What's more, I will invite him to partake of it,

Unless, perchance, to kick me out he should see fit.

I'd best eat quickly. [*He eats with redoubled haste.*

When my dinner I have done,

I'll round about the mansion take a hasty run.

The host, a bachelor, is possibly in league

With something feminine. I seem to scent intrigue

In the still atmosphere. Howe'er my thoughts I speak

It matters not; so here, mine host! in mode antique

I thank thee, and embrace the altar of the feast!

[*He kneels and encircles the table with his arms.*

This charming wine [*drinks*] must be a good man's wine
at least.

Yes, when he comes, I will announce my proper name,

And put the, O my most accursed coz, to shame!

That Zafari, dare he to step across thy way?

That worthless gipsy, naked-footed brigand — eh? —

Proclaim relationship, however fair and just: —

Don Cæsar de Bazan, cousin of Don Sallust

(Of whom he thought himself so comfortably rid)!

Ah, what surprise! How came he back, then, in Madrid?

Was't in the night? Was't in the morning? How
and where?

Did he turn up? "The devil brought him," say the men.
 "Oh, la! we thought him dead," the women murmur then.
 And yet this mighty clatter will increase tenfold
 When my three hundred creditors shout for their gold,
 My worthy cousin Sallust. Gold I sorely lack
 At present. *[A noise heard at doors.]*

Some one comes! Now for a hasty track
 Outside perchance. Great Cæsar, be thyself; and seem
 No less.

*[He envelops himself in his cloak up to the eyes. The
 doors at the back open and a Lackey in livery appears,
 carrying a heavy leather wallet on his back.]*

SCENE III.

DON CÆSAR, A LACKEY.

DON CÆSAR (*gazing at him from head to foot*).
 What seek you friend? *[Aside.]* The peril is extreme;
 I must be firm.

LACKEY.
 I seek Don Cæsar de Bazan.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).
 Well, this is marvellous! *[Aloud.]* Don Cæsar? I'm
 the man.

LACKEY.
 You really are Don Cæsar?

DON CÆSAR.
 Yes, the very same.
 I always had the honour to sustain that name.
 And Count of Garo —

LACKEY (*putting the wallet down*).

Will your lordship count that out ?

DON CÆSAR (*astonished, aside*).

Money for me ! What is the silly fool about ?

[*Aloud.*] My very good —

LACKEY.

If you will only kindly count,
You'll find, my lord, that I have brought the right
amount.

DON CÆSAR (*gravely*).

All right. I understand. [*Aside.*] I wish indeed the
devil —

But it is fortunate — Be it for good or evil,
Trust me, I'll not refuse it. [*Aloud.*] Need you a
receipt ?

LACKEY.

So please you, no.

DON CÆSAR (*pointing to table and chair*).

Then put it there, or on that seat.

Whence comes it, sir ?

LACKEY.

Your lordship knows.

DON CÆSAR.

Ha ! to be sure.

But —

LACKEY.

Truly, it is sent by one to make secure
The execution of what you well know.

DON CÆSAR.

Ha !

RUY BLAS.

121

LACKEY.

And

We both must be reserved — hush !

DON CÆSAR.

Hush ! I understand.

This money comes — The phrase is really grandiose ;
Repeat it to me.

LACKEY.

Yes, this money —

DON CÆSAR.

I suppose

It is from him —

LACKEY.

And for that purpose —

DON CÆSAR.

Even so —

'T is clear. And both of us —

LACKEY.

Must be, as you well know,

Discreet.

DON CÆSAR.

That's very certain, friend.

LACKEY.

Well, as for me

I fail to comprehend.

DON CÆSAR.

Ah, bah !

LACKEY.

But you can see ?

DON CÆSAR.

Of course, and of the money I receive the charge.

LACKEY.

Count it, my lord.

DON CÆSAR.

What do you take me for?

[Admiring the size of the wallet on the table.]

How large

This fellow's stomach is!

LACKEY *(insisting)*.

Nay, if you please, my lord —

DON CÆSAR.

I'll take your word.

LACKEY.

Well, then, my lord, this precious hoard
Is all in sovereigns; good quadruples, each in grains
Some thirty-six. Of silver, too, each sack contains
A goodly store.

[CÆSAR opens the wallet, and pulls out several bags of gold and silver coin, which he regards with admiration. He then empties some of them on the table, and fills his pockets with the gold.]

DON CÆSAR *(with delight)*.

The hero of the fairy tale
With golden heaps did thus his eyes and heart regale!
He amorously died upon his precious million;
But, as for me, I'll load up, like a sturdy galleon.
[He continues to fill every pocket he has about him, and seems to have completely forgotten the presence of the
LACKEY.



LACKEY (*standing coolly by, watching him*).
My lord, I wait your orders.

DON CÆSAR.

Eh? What for?

LACKEY.

To do
That which, of course, is fully understood by *you*.
Great interests —

DON CÆSAR (*abruptly and intelligently*).

Public and private; yes, you're right.

LACKEY.

The execution of the same is to be quite
Immediate. That's what I was told to say.

DON CÆSAR (*clapping him on the back*).

You are
A faithful servant, and surpass by very far
The common run of them.

LACKEY.

I also here am sent
To aid, so that no time should uselessly be spent.

DON CÆSAR.

Your master is a thoughtful man, and knows what's
what.

Let's do as he requires. [*Aside.*] May I be hanged, or
shot,

If I know how to act! [*Aloud.*] Approach ere we begin,
And swallow this. [*Pours out wine and hands it to him.*]

LACKEY.

My lord —

DON CÆSAR.

'T is Oropesa ; in

All Spain not better wine.

[LACKEY *drinks*. CÆSAR *again fills glass*.

Now let us sit and talk.

[*Sits at table with him, and as fast as he drinks, CÆSAR fills his glass.*His eyes begin to sparkle. [*Aside, aloud.*] Did'st e'er
take a walk

Abroad, and watch the dark and curling smoke ascend ?

Well, that comes from the fires of our own passions, friend.

[*Fills glass.*

This may seem stupid, but the smoke when in the sky

And in a nasty chimney acts quite differently ;

The one goes gaily up, the other tumbles down, —

[*Rubs his knee.*That is, the man does. [*Fills both glasses.*] Man's at best
a clumsy clown, —A lump of lead. Let's drink. Why, all these rich
doubloons

Are not worth e'en a song from drunken passing loons.

[*Mysteriously.*

Look here ! we must be prudent. If we fill too full

We burst ! My very faithful friend, together pull

The collar of my cloak.

[*Leans forward.*LACKEY (*proudly*).

My lord, please recollect

I'm not your valet.

[*Before CÆSAR can stop him, he rings the bell on the table.*

DON CÆSAR (*aside and afraid*).

He has rung. Now I expect
The master will in person come. I'm lost!
[*One of the Negroes enters.* DON CÆSAR, *in a state of*
anxiety turns away not knowing what to do.

LACKEY (*to the Negro*).

Attach

The collar of his lordship's cloak.

[*The Negro gravely approaches CÆSAR, hooks the collar of*
his cloak; then bows, and retires, leaving CÆSAR petri-
fied with astonishment.

DON CÆSAR (*rising from the table, aside*).

It is old Scratch,
And this the house of Beelzebub!
[*Goes forward, and walks up and down with rapid strides.*

Well, be it so,
Whate'er turns up is welcome. One thing now I know
Is that of money there's a very ample stock,
And thus I'm planted firm as any sea-girt rock.
[*He turns to the LACKEY, who remains drinking at the*
table, and who begins to sway about on his chair.
Quite right. Go on. [*Aside.*] Now, shall I pay my
debts? — Oh, fie!

Cæsar, could you be such a fool as e'en to try?
To water such vile flowers as creditors would be
A waste indeed of time and youthful energy.
There's nothing so corrupting to a man as gold;
And naught a more plebeian spirit would unfold
Than paying what one owes. What would the gallants
say?
Ha! well —

LACKEY (*draining his glass*).

What orders have you?

DON CÆSAR.

Don't disturb me, pray ;

I meditate. Drink on the while.

[*The LACKEY continues drinking. All at once CÆSAR taps his forehead as an idea strikes him.*

Yes ! [*To LACKEY.*] Get thee up.

This must thou do. Upon these golden pieces sup ;
Fill all thy pockets !

[*The LACKEY rises very unsteadily, and proceeds, as directed, to fill his pockets with the gold ; CÆSAR talking to him and helping him.*

In a narrow lane that ends
The Plaza Mayor, stands a house to which one's friends
Might not object, because it is a fine one ; but
One of its panes has had a piece of paper put
Across it. Nine 's the number, and the front is narrow.
You 'll enter there.

LACKEY.

What next ?

DON CÆSAR.

The stairs are like an arrow ;
Beware how you go up.

LACKEY.

A ladder, eh ?

DON CÆSAR.

Not quite,
But nearly. When you reach the top of the long flight
You 'll see a lovely creature who resides up there.
She wears a six-sous cap, has curly auburn hair,
And is in stature short. A charming woman she
As ever any one could hope, or wish, to see.

Her eyes in former times were brilliant indigo ;
 And once before the Pope she danced a fandango.
 To her one hundred golden ducats you will give ;
 She is my mistress, so respect her, as you live !
 At the next door, and redder than the reddest rose,
 You'll see a tall broad man who owns a monstrous nose ;
 His hat is slouched close down upon his shaggy brows,
 And his long rapier knows at least a thousand rows :
 You'll give him six piastres. Farther on proceed,
 And soon you'll see a pitch-black tenement succeed, —
 A restaurant where wine is drunk, and songs are sung
 Such as are heard there only. You will see among
 The company that smoke and drink, a gentleman
 Who never swears (I really don't believe he can, —
 He's very quiet) ; Goulatromba, — that's his name.
 He'll take his thirty ecus with a blush of shame,
 No doubt ; but tell him he's to spend them all in drink,
 And more will follow ; so there is no need to shrink.
 Give freely to the ragamuffins all around ;
 They'll swallow anything, from halfpence to a pound !
 So be not much astonished should their staring eyes
 Assume what might be thought a most unnatural size.

LACKEY.

And next ?

DON CÆSAR.

What money may remain you then will keep.

LACKEY.

Any more orders ?

DON CÆSAR.

Yes ; be sure that you drink deep, —
 Get very drunk. Break all, except your precious head,
 And seek not till to-morrow night to go to bed.

LACKEY.

My lord, that is sufficient. [*Zig-zags towards the door.*]

DON CÆSAR (*watching him, aside*).

He's superbly drunk? [*Calls him back.*]
Just stop a minute!—when you're out, belike some
monk

Of jollity's great order will be at your heels.
Be sure that you behave yourself so that he feels
You are a worthy comrade of the drinker class.
Should sundry pieces from your pockets, as you pass
Along, fall out, pursue your steady, onward path,
And let them fall. To show in any way your wrath—
E'en saw you them picked up—would be bad form indeed.
If meddling fingers try your pockets, take no heed,
But be indulgent. In this naughty world of ours,
Of strange, untoward adventure, and of evil powers,
'Tis hard indeed if now and then a taste of joy
To some poor suffering creature is not an alloy
For his long pain. [*Gravely.*] No doubt the rope will
stretch his neck

Some day; then pity 't is his simple joy to check!
Now, off with thee!

[*Exit LACKEY.* CÆSAR, *when alone, sits at the table, and, placing his elbows on it, appears to reflect deeply.*]

A wise man never makes abuse
Of money nor the Christian, but the best of use.
I've got sufficient now to live at least eight days,—
And I *will* live! If still a little by me stays
Beyond that time, in pious works I'll use it; but
The door, e'en then, will surely in my face be shut!
The blunder that this clumsy lackey-knave has made
Will be found out; and spite of all that I have said—
[*The doors at the back open, and a DUENNA enters. She has grey hair; wears a black dress and mantilla; and carries a fan.*]

SCENE IV.

DON CÆSAR, A DUENNA.

DUENNA (*on the threshold*).

Don Cæsar de Bazan ?

DON CÆSAR (*although absorbed, suddenly raises his head*).

What now ? Ha, a female ! [*Aside.*
[*Whilst the DUENNA is making a deep curtsey at the doors,*

CÆSAR *starts up and comes forward to the front.*
Either the devil or Don Sallust heads this tale !
I'll wager I shall see my cousin next appear.
An old duenna. [*Aloud.*] Cæsar de Bazan is here.
What seek you with him ? Usually it is the case
The old one is succeeded by a youthful face.

DUENNA (*curtseying again and signing the cross*).
My lord, I here salute you on this holy day,
And humbly trust you never may be led astray.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).
That's very pious. [*Aloud.*] Be it so. Most worthy dame,
I bid you welcome.

DUENNA.
May high Heaven bless your name.
[*Mysteriously.*
A certain somebody has sent me here to you ;
Have you then given her, to-night, a rendezvous ?

DON CÆSAR.
'T is very possible.

DUENNA (*advancing and showing him a folded note, which she does not allow him to take*).

Well, then, my gay young spark,
'Tis really you that 'neath the cover of the dark
Would see her whom you know of?

DON CÆSAR.

Without doubt.

DUENNA.

'T is good.

This lady, being married — be it understood
To an old bearded hunk — has only one refuge
In her distress, and that of course is subterfuge.
It naturally is her greatest wish and care
That all should be secure ere hither she repair,
And therefore am I sent. I nothing know of her,
But she who sent me said that you would all infer
From what I tell you, leaving out the names.

DON CÆSAR.

Quite so —

Excepting mine. In these precautions doth she show
Her own good sense.

DUENNA.

Exactly. 'T is but right, methinks,
Such care should be displayed, for every lady shrinks
At chances of exposure; yet when she desires
To see the object who in her own soul inspires
True love, she risks the interview. So now, my lord,
Give me what confirmation you may best afford
That all is safe.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

Oh, bless the ugly would-be saint!
What a stiff hedge-row round a billet-doux. [*Aloud.*]
Acquaint
Your lady that you've seen me. — *me*, I say.

DUENNA (*laying note on table, which CÆSAR eyes curiously*).

Then you
Will write upon the back of this same billet-doux
The one word "Come." But it must not be in your hand,
In case of danger. This, of course, you understand.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

May I be hanged, I don't! [*Aloud.*] Well, let me see —
[*Stretches out his hand to take the letter, which is sealed,*
but the DUENNA prevents him from touching it.

DUENNA.

Touch not!

You ought to recognize the fold.

DON CÆSAR.

Of course. [*Aside.*] Oh, what
A curs'd old witch! I'm balked. But I must play my
part.

[*He rings the bell. One of the Negroes immediately*
appears.

Here! Can you write?

[*The Negro nods his head only, to the astonishment of DON*
CÆSAR.

A nod! So, are you dumb, my smart
Black beauty? [*Negro makes a sign in the affirmative.*

Good. Dumb servants, eh? [*Aside.*] What next?
[*Shows Negro the letter that the DUENNA holds down on*
the table.

Write there,

"Come."

[*Negro writes as directed, and the DUENNA puts away the*
letter. On a sign from DON CÆSAR, the Negro in-
stantly retires.

[*Aside.*] He is most obedient.

DUENNA (*approaching CÆSAR*).

Will be with you to-night. The lady fair
Ah, she is beautiful!

DON CÆSAR.

Yes, charming!

DUENNA.

Her attendant also. See her pull
Me on one side in church, greatly to my surprise,
During the sermon. What a profile! and what eyes!
The sparkle of the demon, but an angel's face;
She talks of love, too, with great learning and much
grace.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

From this account the servant would for me suffice.

DUENNA.

We're apt sometimes, in judging to be over nice.
There's beauty in the mistress, also in the slave;
But yours must be most lovely!

DON CÆSAR.

Of her perfections! Ah, I well may rave

DUENNA (*with a low curtsey*).

Your lordship's hands. With humility I kiss

DON CÆSAR (*giving a handful of gold*).

And I now grease your paw with this.

DUENNA (*pocketing the gold*).

How golden is all youth indeed!

DON CÆSAR.

Farewell, dame.

DUENNA (*going, returns*).

Ha!

Should you e'er wish to find me, my name's Oliva.
The convent of San Isidro.

[*Goes out at doors, and then puts her head in again.*

Upon the right

Within the church, by the third pillar I'm in sight.

[*CÆSAR makes a gesture of impatience. She goes out, and then almost immediately re-appears.*

You'll see your love to-night. Think of me in your prayers.

DON CÆSAR (*angrily*).

Begone! [*The DUENNA goes out, and CÆSAR is left alone.*

Well, even if I'm taken unawares

Astonishment is scarcely possible. With gold

I'm well supplied; but what Dame Fortune will unfold

Is yet a puzzle. I have stayed my appetite,

And now a something choice will gratify my sight.

From such a bright beginning Hope may well ascend;

Will it sustain its flight, or plump down at the end?

[*The doors at the back open, and DON GURITAN appears with two long naked swords under his arm.*

SCENE V.

DON CÆSAR, DON GURITAN.

DON GURITAN (*at the back*).

Don Cæsar de Bazan?

DON CÆSAR (*turning, and seeing GURITAN with swords*).

That's in the right direction!

Th' adventure was a good one: now it's quite perfection!

A first-rate dinner, gold, a rendezvous — a duel!

I'm Cæsar once again! My fate's no longer cruel!

[*He gaily approaches GURITAN with repeated bows. GURITAN, with fixed eyes advances stiffly to the front of the stage.*

You are quite right. 'Tis here. Approach, and take a seat

[*Presents him with a chair, which GURITAN takes no notice of.*

Make yourself quite at home. Pray sit, and rest your feet.

I'm really quite delighted that you've hither come.

What do they in Madrid? I've only just got home.

It is a charming town of which I nothing know.

Does good Matalobos his pranks still in it show?

Myself, I've little fear for those who cut a purse;

A girl who steals a heart I think a great deal worse.

Oh, women! faithless women! they o'erwrought my brain

With their sly arts; but speak to me! I would regain

My senses which are scared; for, strange as it appears,

I have been thus unsettled for the past few years.

I'm an absurdity, existing, scarce alive, —

A sleeping member in the busy human hive.

Robbed of my plume; the gloves I've lost from off my hands,

And now I'm just returned from far-off savage lands!

DON GURITAN.

You say you just arrive? I, too, have done the same;

But from much farther off.

DON CÆSAR.

What then, may be the name
Of the much-favoured clime?

DON GURITAN.

The north, if now my mouth
Must speak it!

DON CÆSAR.

Strange! and I have come from farthest south.

DON GURITAN.

I'm furious!

DON CÆSAR.

I burst with rage!

DON GURITAN.

Twelve hundred leagues
I've come!

DON CÆSAR.

Two thousand I have done. Talk of intrigues!
What have I not been victim of? Yes; I have seen
Men of all colours, — yellow, black and blue, and green;
And women also! Skies of most delightful azure;
Towns built in which to pass a life of ceaseless pleasure.
Outside them though, whenever they were ruled by
Turk,
Appeared rough specimens of his peculiar work, —
Lank bodies nailed to doors, or else impaled on spikes!

DON GURITAN.

I have been swindled, sir!

DON CÆSAR.

My lot yet harder strikes,
For I was sold!

DON GURITAN.

I, nearly exiled!

DON CÆSAR.

I was swung

Close upon off!

DON GURITAN.

I, sent away to Neubourg 'mong
 Barbarian Germans. Most adroitly was it done.
 I bore a box. Inside, a paper, written on,
 Read thus: "Keep the old fool as long as e'er you can."

DON CÆSAR (*roaring with laughter*).

Perfect indeed! Who did it?

DON GURITAN.

Cæsar de Bazan.

I'll twist his neck!

DON CÆSAR.

Ha!

DON GURITAN.

Not content, as it would seem,
 He sends a lackey with apologies! To dream
 I would accept them! No, sir! I detained the groom
 In custody, — yes; locked him in my private room.
 This rascal, Cæsar, adds to injury insult;
 And death, alone, for this must be the quick result.
 Where is he, then, that I may kill him?

DON CÆSAR.

Here you have

Don Cæsar!

DON GURITAN.

What! again?

DON CÆSAR.

Of course.

DON GURITAN.

Look here, my brave
Young friend, you weary me. Enough, I say, of this !
I might consider your behavior, too, amiss.

DON CÆSAR (*laughing*).

You're really most diverting. Are you of those fellows
Who look upon themselves as martyrs, when they're
jealous ?

If so, I'm sorry for you. From our own sad vices
Evil too often springs ; not from the wild devices
Of others. I myself, I tell you, rather would
Wear a tall pair of horns, than have it understood
That I was jealous. You are both, perchance. To-night
Your wife will meet me here.

DON GURITAN.

My wife !

DON CÆSAR.

Ay, by this light !

Your wife.

DON GURITAN.

But I'm not married !

DON CÆSAR.

What, sir, can you mean ?
Not married ? For the last few minutes you have been
Before my face assuming all those injured airs
That husbands only take when groaning under cares
More or less real. What right have you to make a fuss ?
Or, I should say, to make yourself ridiculous ?

DON GURITAN.

Are you aware, sir, that you're most exasperating?

DON CÆSAR.

Bah!

DON GURITAN.

'T is too much!

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed?

DON GURITAN.

Yes! and without debating
Farther the point, you'll pay me!

DON CÆSAR (*sarcastically examining GURITAN'S shoes
which are smothered with ribbons*).

In a former day
The head was always chosen for a grand display
Of ribbons. Fashion is in changes wondrous fleet;
I see 't is now the thing to decorate the feet!

DON GURITAN.

Come, we will fight!

DON CÆSAR (*coolly*).

You think so?

DON GURITAN.

Although you are not
Don Cæsar, I'll commence with you!

DON CÆSAR.

Good! On the spot?

At once!
DON GURITAN (*presenting a sword*).

DON CÆSAR (*accepting the sword*).

Well, when a duel offers, I e'er take it.

DON GURITAN.

Where shall it be ?

DON CÆSAR (*pointing off*).

Behind yon wall. Quiet can't make it
A spot more favourable.

DON GURITAN (*trying the point of the sword*).

Lead me where you will.
Don Cæsar I can duly in succession kill.

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed ?

DON GURITAN.

Of course.

DON CÆSAR (*sticking the point of his sword into the boards*).

If one of us should now be killed,
I cannot see how this same boast can be fulfilled !

DON GURITAN.

Come on, sir, — come !

[*They go out at the back, and before the sound of their footsteps dies away, a small concealed door opens in the wall on the right, and DON SALLUST enters. He is dressed in a dark green habit, and looks round uneasily.*]

SCENE VI.

DON SALLUST.

I cast my eyes around the room
And mark no preparations. Must I then assume
He has neglected them ?

[Seeing the table loaded with meats, etc.

What means all this ?

[Listening to the sound of CÆSAR and GURITAN'S retreating footsteps.

That sound ?

Gudiel observed the Page this morning, and soon found
He sought the lodging of Don Guritan. Ruy Blas
Absents himself — and this same Page — Is 't come to
pass

That there's some counter-plot afoot ? By Satan ! yes,
I see it all ! Some message to the Queen, — naught
less ! —

Through Guritan, to warn her of the trap now set.
Naught from the Mutes can be obtained ; but, trust
me ! yet

Will I defeat them ! Guritan it struck me not
Might be gained over.

*[DON CÆSAR enters ; he has the sword in his hand, which
he throws upon a chair.*

SCENE VII.

DON SALLUST, DON CÆSAR.

DON CÆSAR (*from the doors at the back*).

Ha, old devil ! this is what

I fully did anticipate.

DON SALLUST (*turning petrified with astonishment*).

Don Cæsar !

DON CÆSAR (*folding his arms with a shout of laughter*).

Well,

What dark, infernal plot's afoot ? It so befell
That I came sprawling on it.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

All, I fear, is lost !

DON CÆSAR (*still laughing*).

This morning long, to my fatigue and certain cost,
I've wriggled in and out of your infernal nets.
No super-dainty fly entangled in them gets
With my consent. I'm here to break them all. Ha, ha !

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

Demon ! what has he done ?

DON CÆSAR (*laughing louder*).

Your man with money — bah ! —
Who came to execute " what you, of course, must know
From him who sent him." This is perfect, is n't it so ?

DON SALLUST.

Well, sir ?

DON CÆSAR.

I made him drunk !

DON SALLUST.

You did ? And then the gold ?

DON CÆSAR (*with dignity*).

In various sums to various persons was it doled ;
One has one's friends, you know.

DON SALLUST.

Unjustly you suspect
Me of designs. I —

DON CÆSAR (*jingling his pockets*).

Truly, I had due respect
For my own pockets, as you may perceive. Then came
The lady —

DON SALLUST.

Ha !

DON CÆSAR (*noticing his anxiety*).

She whom you know — without a name —
[SALLUST *listens with redoubled anxiety*. CÆSAR, *laughing*,
goes on.]

She sent an old duenna to me — ugly cat ! —
With quite a beard, and nose inclining to be flat —

DON SALLUST.

Why came she ?

DON CÆSAR.

Just to see that all was really right, —
That it *was* Cæsar who would meet the dame to-night !

DON SALLUST (*aside*).Just Heaven ! [*Aloud*.] What was your reply ?

DON CÆSAR.

Of course I said
I would be here.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

So, so ! I need not be afraid.
All is not lost, perchance.

DON CÆSAR.

To crown the day's events,
Your slaying Captain Guritan himself presents.

[SALLUST *makes a movement of surprise.*

He would not see, this morning, some sage messenger, —
A lackey sent by "Cæsar" with him to confer, —
And he, in consequence, demanded satisfaction —

DON SALLUST.

Well, and what then ?

DON CÆSAR.

I straightway killed this man of action.

DON SALLUST.

You did ?

DON CÆSAR.

I did. He's now expiring near a wall.

DON SALLUST.

But are you sure he's dead ?

DON CÆSAR.

By this, he's past recall.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

I breathe again. So far he's done no real harm,
But on the contrary. So, I must now disarm
My adversary, and get rid of him at once.
It might indeed have been most awkward, for the nonce.
[*Aloud.*] Your story's singular. Then others you've
not seen ?

DON CÆSAR.

Not one ; but I shall see some, as, of course, I mean
Within this precious domicile of yours to stay.

I'll cause a rumpus, and, perhaps, no small dismay,
By a great scandal in the town. Of this rest sure.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

The devil !

[*Quickly, and going nearer to DON CÆSAR.*
Keep the money ; but, pray, leave the house !

DON CÆSAR.

Think you I'll steal away then slyly, like a mouse ?
Such tactics might suit *you*, no doubt ; but won't suit *me*.
Of course, you would be glad that I again should see
The lovely azure of that glowing southern sky !
Not so.

DON SALLUST.

Believe me —

DON CÆSAR.

No ! Within this palace-prison,
A strong conviction in my mind has now arisen, —
That you intend some villainous and traitorous deed.
Think you of what is passing I have ta'en no heed ?
These court-intrigues remind one of that ladder double ;
On one side mounts the patient, with his look of trouble ;
Upon the other 't is the executioner, —
With whom the 'foresaid patient must perforce confer, —
That's you !

DON SALLUST.

Ha !

DON CÆSAR.

I withdraw the ladder ! Bir-r-r —

DON SALLUST.

I swear —

DON CÆSAR.

To spoil this would-be plot, I'll make it now my care.
I know you're very subtle, cousin ; but this time

I, too, will try my hand at taking birds with lime.
I mean to stay.

DON SALLUST.

But listen —

DON CÆSAR.

Spare your rhetoric !

You sold me to the corsairs. 'T was a scurvy trick !
And now you seek to rob me even of my name !
At least, to compromise it — soil it ! Where's your
shame ?

DON SALLUST.

A far-off chance !

DON CÆSAR.

A far-off chance ! Treat rogues as such,
And fools as fools ; but men defile not with your touch !
I will frustrate your plans, — save those you seek to soil ;
Success will well reward me for my hours of toil.

[He mounts up to the window, and looks out.]

My name shall ring upon the house-top. Stay, and see.
Ha ! Alguazils are passing.

[Waving his hand outside the window, and shouting.]

Hither ! Come to me !

DON SALLUST *(aghast, at the front of the stage)*.

Should he now name himself, then all is lost indeed !

[Enter at the back an ALCADÉ and several ALGUAZILS. SALLUST in great perplexity. CÆSAR walks up to the ALCADÉ in triumph.]

SCENE VIII.

The same. AN ALCADE, ALGUAZILS.

DON CÆSAR (*to the ALCADE*).

Alcade, your presence here is of the utmost need.

DON SALLUST (*pointing to DON CÆSAR*).

To take Matalobos, the famous robber-chief !

DON CÆSAR (*stupefied*).

How ? What !

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

Twenty-four hours wins all ! [*Aloud to ALCADE.*]

Yes, seize the thief !

In open day he ventured here. [ALGUAZILS *seize* CÆSAR.

DON CÆSAR (*furiously to SALLUST*).

Your lackey I —

With vast facility you tell a monstrous lie !

ALCADE.

Who called us here ?

DON SALLUST.

I did.

DON CÆSAR.

Another lie !

ALCADE.

Peace, man !

Would'st reason with us ?

DON CÆSAR.

I 'm Don Cæsar de Bazan !

DON SALLUST.

Don Cæsar! See his cloak. If you examine it,
 You'll find the name 'Don Sallust' 'neath the collar writ.
 He has just stolen it from me.

[ALGUAZILS *pull off the cloak and the* ALCADE *examines it.*

ALCADE.

Yes, that's quite correct.

DON SALLUST.

The doublet that he wears —

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

Another lie direct!

Curs'd knave!

DON SALLUST.

— Was from the Count of Alba stolen, sirs.

[*Pointing out a crest embroidered on the left sleeve.*

Here is the crest.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

The devil in the villain stirs!

ALCADE (*examining the crest*).

Two castles, or —

DON SALLUST.

Below, "Enriquez Guzman."

[CÆSAR *when struggling with* ALGUAZILS *causes several*
doubloons to fall out of his pockets. SALLUST *shows*
the ALCADE *how full of them his pockets are.*

Thus

An honest man displays his wealth, and teaches us
 The way to keep it!

ALCADE.

Humph!

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

I'm nicely done for!

[ALGUAZILS *search him, and take the money from him.*

AN ALGUAZIL.

Here

Are various papers.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

All my billets-doux! Oh dear!

How carefully I saved them.

ALCADE (*examining them*).

Letters, writings; yes.

DON SALLUST (*pointing out superscription*).

Count Alba — see!

ALCADE.

Yes.

DON CÆSAR.

But —

ALGUAZILS (*binding his hands together*).

'T is he! and no one less.

AN ALGUAZIL (*entering, to ALCADÉ*).

A man, señor, outside lies dead, — assassinated.

ALCADE.

And the assassin?

DON SALLUST (*pointing to CÆSAR*).

There!

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

Had the old fool but waited!

DON SALLUST.

When he came in, a while ago, he had a sword
Drawn in his hand. 'Tis here.

[Pointing to sword on the chair.]

ALCADE *(taking and examining it)*.

Full proof it will afford :

There's blood upon it.

[Turning to CÆSAR.]

Now, sir, with them you must tramp.

DON SALLUST *(to CÆSAR who is about to be led away)*.
Good-night, Matalobos.

DON CÆSAR *(striding up to and regarding him sternly)*.
You're a confounded scamp !



SCENE.— *The same as in the last act. A lamp is on the table, and as the curtain rises RUY BLAS is alone. A sort of long black robe hides his dress.*



ACT V.

THE LION AND THE TIGER.

SCENE I.

RUY BLAS.

My dreams, my visions, all have vanished ! Nothing meets
 My eyes ! I've wandered all day long about the streets.
 Yet have I hoped. I'm calm. In the still hours of night
 The lamp of thought burns with a purer, brighter light.
 I nothing see that's fearful in these sombre walls :
 Dark looms the furniture where'er the shadow falls.
 The black, dumb servants are asleep. All is repose,
 And nowhere pale Alarm her shuddering presence shows.
 Yes ; all goes well. My page no treachery can stir.
 And Guritan is safe in all concerning *her*. [permit
 Kind Heaven ! I may well bless thee that thou didst
 My warning to attain her ; that I could outwit
 The arch-deceiver Sallust ; that she need not fear

His cruel hand. Once saved, then let my death draw near;
I'll hail it!

[Produces a small phial from under his robe and places it on the table.]

Yes, die now, O miserable one!
E'en here, and all alone; for, lo! thy task is done.
Whatever is thy crime, here let it die with thee,
[Opens his robe, and appears clad in the livery of the First Act.]

And on thy tomb be cast this cursed livery!
Should yonder demon gaze upon me, when no more,
[Pushes a piece of furniture against the secret door in the wall.]

At least he shall not enter through that hateful door.
[Returns to the table.]

The page has met Don Guritan; for when he left
This morning, 't was not eight o'clock. Of all bereft,
Why should I live? *[He fixes his eyes upon the phial.]*

I have pronounced my own sad doom;
And soon shall close the ponderous portals of the tomb
Above my head! Yes, meet it is that I should fall —
And yet she loved me! *[Throws himself into a chair.]*
Heaven, still on thee I call!

My courage fails me. *[Weeps.]* Shall they then our
hearts thus sever?

Is there no peace for us? Must the stern fiat "Never,"
Go forth!

[Hides his head in his hands and weeps bitterly; then raises his head and wildly continues, still regarding the phial.]

The man who sold me this, the question asked
What day 't was of the month. I knew not. Time has
passed

Too rapidly for my poor brain. Men are so bad
That one may die twice o'er, and no one feel e'en sad.
Ah, how I suffer! — She for me did fondly care —
The hand I pressed, the lips that touched my forehead,
where

Will the remembrance be? — Sweet angel! — Yes, I die
Heart-broken! Never shall I hear thy gentle sigh
For my hard fate! see not thy pallid anxious face,
Thy lovely form, bend o'er me in its matchless grace —
Ah, never, never more!

[*He moves his hand towards the phial; and as he is about to take hold of it, the doors at the back open. THE QUEEN appears, clothed in white, over which is a dark-coloured mantle and hood, which, thrown back upon her shoulders, displays her pallid face and head. She carries a dark-lantern in her hand, which she puts down on the floor, and hastily advances towards RUY BLAS.*

SCENE II.

RUY BLAS, THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN.

Don Cæsar!

RUY BLAS (*turning suddenly in affright and closing his robe*).

Heavens! 't is she!

Into these frightful toils she falls! Oh, can it be!

[*Aside.*] Hold, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Cæsar! Why this cry of wild alarm?

RUY BLAS.

Who bid you hither come!

THE QUEEN.

Yourself.

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

Is there! [*Aloud.*] The demon's arm
Myself — but how?

THE QUEEN.

From you I have received —

RUY BLAS.

Speak quick!

THE QUEEN.

A letter.

RUY BLAS.

Ha! — from me! Be not deceived —

THE QUEEN.

It is your writing —

RUY BLAS.

Say not that it is my hand!
What mortal brain could this foul treachery withstand!

THE QUEEN (*taking a note from her bosom and giving it to him*).

Nay, read it for yourself, and judge.

RUY BLAS (*reading*).

“A danger, deep
And terrible, is hanging o'er my head. To sleep
I dare not; so to aid me in my pressing need
I pray thee, O my gentle Queen —”
[*He becomes stupefied with horror, and is unable to proceed.*]

THE QUEEN (*leaning over and pointing to the words with her finger*).

“Use all the speed
That time will lend thee, and this night to me repair
At my lone house, or I must sink in deep despair.”

RUY BLAS (*in a faint voice*).

Base treachery!

THE QUEEN (*continuing*).

“Unknown, unrecognized, at night,
Facing the avenue, a door will meet your sight,
And there you'll enter. One most faithful to the cause
Will welcome you within.”

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

How the arch-villain draws
The net together! I'd forgotten this. [*Aloud.*] Begone!

THE QUEEN.

Don Cæsar! I will go. Dismissed thus, and alone!
What have I done?

RUY BLAS.

What done? Great heavens! you will be lost!

THE QUEEN.

What mean you?

RUY BLAS.

All I dare to say is, at the most,
Fly! and fly quickly!

THE QUEEN.

I this morning hither sent,
To make all sure, one I could trust —

RUY BLAS (*looking anxiously round*).

With terror spent,
Each fleeting moment is a dagger to my heart!
I feel your life-blood flowing from you! O depart!

THE QUEEN (*as if struck by an idea*).

This fond devotion, that my love for you hath dreamed,
Inspires me! Some dread danger round your head hath
gleamed,
And you would hide it from me. Cæsar, here I stay!

RUY BLAS.

Oh, Heaven! Cherish not the thought, but speed away!
This is no hour — no place for you!

THE QUEEN.

Is yours. Why, then — And yet, this note

RUY BLAS (*raising his eyes to heaven*).

Great Heaven, thy pitying aid devote
To her!

THE QUEEN.

You wish to send me hence!

RUY BLAS (*taking her hands*).

Believe —

THE QUEEN.

'T is so.

You wrote this letter, then —

RUY BLAS.

'T is meet that you should know
I did not write. I am a very demon, hence!
'T is you that under this most mean and foul pretence
Are lured to sure destruction. It is true. Yes, hell
Is gaping here around with snares as deep and fell
As can be laid! Oh, can I not persuade you yet!
Will you not comprehend, — you upon whom I've set
My heart — my soul! You know I love you; then be
saved!
The danger is too great to be thus rashly braved.

THE QUEEN.

Don Cæsar!

RUY BLAS.

Oh, begone ! Yet now I think of it —
You were let in ?

THE QUEEN.

I was.

RUY BLAS.

By whom ?

THE QUEEN.

One who thought fit
To keep within the shadow of the sombre wall ;
He wore a mask, too.

RUY BLAS.

Satan ! Was he short, or tall ?
And did he speak ? Was any question by him asked ?
[*A man with a mask on appears at the doors at back.*]

MASKED MAN.

No, none !

[*Takes off his mask, and THE QUEEN and RUY BLAS, terror-stricken, recognize DON SALLUST.*]

SCENE III.

The Same. DON SALLUST.

RUY BLAS.

Fly ! madame — fly !

DON SALLUST.

The time for that is passed ;
Madame de Neubourg is no longer Queen of Spain.

THE QUEEN (*with horror*).

Don Sallust!

DON SALLUST (*pointing to RUY BLAS*).

Henceforth mate to *that* man; seek in vain
To fly from him!

THE QUEEN.

This is indeed a snare, deep set!

Don Cæsar —

RUY BLAS (*despairingly*).

Madame, he hath spread this fatal net!

DON SALLUST (*slowly approaching THE QUEEN*).

I have you now; so hear me whilst I calmly speak
Of facts, the which your Majesty may vainly seek
To contradict. I find you here at midnight in
Don Cæsar's chamber — Interrupt not! To begin,
This circumstance alone will in the eyes of Rome
Annul your marriage. This, I'll see, shall straightway
come,

And promptly, to the Holy Father's knowledge; but
To counteract it, one condition will I put —
'T is this:

[*Draws from his pocket a parchment, which he opens and
presents to THE QUEEN.*

That you will sign this letter to the King,
Which to his hand the Lord High Chamberlain shall
bring.

That then, both you and he together shall repair
To a well furnished carriage, which is standing there
In readiness. [*Pointing outside.*] Beneath the cover of
the night

I'll freely give my aid in this immediate flight
By Alcantara into Portugal. Obey,
And no one knows. Refuse, and at the break of day

Madrid shall ring with your adventure here. My hand
Is firm. Writing materials you can here command.
[*Points to the table on which is a small desk.*]

THE QUEEN (*overwhelmed, sinks into a fauteuil*).
I'm in his power!

DON SALLUST.

Your signature is all I need
To send this to the King.
[*In a low voice to RUY BLAS who seems struck as with a
thunderbolt.*]

I work for you. Take heed!
[*To THE QUEEN.*] Sign, madame!

THE QUEEN (*aside and trembling*).
What am I to do?

DON SALLUST (*in her ear, presenting a pen*).

What is a crown
Compared to happiness! In that you may well drown
All thought about the hollow splendours of a throne.
Rest sure of secrecy. The servants are my own,
And nothing know of this. It rests between us three.
[*Endeavours to put the pen into her hand, which she
neither takes nor rejects.*]
If you refuse, the upshot of it you will see
In scandal, and the cloister!

THE QUEEN (*overcome*).
Heav'n!

DON SALLUST (*indicating RUY BLAS*).

He loves you well,
And is most worthy of you; neither need I dwell
Upon his rank and name. Don Cæsar de Bazan —
[*Places THE QUEEN'S hand upon the parchment, which,
trembling and faint, she is upon the point of signing.*]

RUY BLAS (*suddenly rousing himself*).

My name is Ruy Blas, simply; lackey to that man!
[Snatches the pen and parchment from THE QUEEN'S hand and tears it.

Sign it not, madame! There! — I stifle!

THE QUEEN.

What say you,

Don Cæsar?

RUY BLAS (*letting his robe fall, and appearing in livery*).

With that title I have naught to do.

[Turning to DON SALLUST.

I've had enough of treason, treachery, and crime!
 I would arrest their progress, — be there only time.
 You deemed that you did well to whisper in my ear
 Those words insidious! They only quelled the fear
 For *her* that held me mute. 'Tis time the truth were
 spoken,
 And that the meshes of your hideous net were broken
 That held me prisoner. True, I wear the lackey's coat;
 But your base, traitorous acts the lackey's soul denote!

DON SALLUST (*coldly to THE QUEEN*).

Madame, he speaks the truth. My servant you behold.

[With a tone of authority to RUY BLAS.

Enough, sir! Say no more.

THE QUEEN (*wringing her hands*).

Great Heaven!

DON SALLUST (*continuing*).

Perchance his words

Are premature.

[Folding his arms, and speaking in a voice of thunder.

Nathless, to me it now affords

The chance to tell you that revenge I long have nursed,

And now in all its crushing fury it shall burst!

How joyously shall laugh the city of Madrid

When it to-morrow learns what its fair sovereign did!

Ha! You have exiled *me*; and *you* I will dethrone!

For wife you offered me a servant of your own! *[Laughs.*

I give you, in return, my lackey for a spouse

Whom you can take, and then (the King once gone) can
house

Right royally! In his fond heart your wealth you'll see!

You made a Duke of him *[laughs]*, so Duchess you
will be! *[Grinding his teeth.*

Ha, you have ground me down! have crushed me 'neath
your feet!

And peacefully have slept!—Now my revenge is sweet!

[Whilst he has been speaking, RUY BLAS has gone noiselessly to the doors, and has locked them. He has then crept softly up behind SALLUST, and just as he finishes his harangue to THE QUEEN with fury and triumph in his eyes, RUY BLAS suddenly grasps SALLUST'S sword, and withdraws it from the sheath.

RUY BLAS *(in a terrible voice, sword in hand).*

You grossly have insulted your most noble Queen!

[SALLUST turns to the doors. RUY BLAS bars the passage.

Turn not: the doors are locked, as plainly can be seen.

Yes, Satan until now has been your guide and guard;

But would he rescue you, the conflict must be hard!

My turn has come! The serpent that besets our path

We readily will crush with concentrated wrath!

No soul can hither come; no fiend from thine own hell!

Writhe as you will, my iron grip shall hold you well!

This man spoke insolently to you, madame; I

[To THE QUEEN.] Will now explain to you the single reason why :

He has no soul ! A monster in the human form
Is he ! But yesterday, when with my feelings warm,
I spoke to him, he trampled on my bruised heart !
And mockingly requested me to do my part
As menial, and close a window. More I prayed :
More crushing was the freezing, heartless part he played.
[To SALLUST.] In these last moments, count the pangs
that you may feel ;

To me they would seem naught, did you them all reveal !
What were my own ! Durst you believe that I could bear
To witness her deep pain ! Hark you ! whate'er his
sphere,

A man when he commits some monstrous, hideous crime
Forfeits all sympathy. Each one may, at the time
With contumely his sentence spit into his face,
And of his hateful presence purge the human race !
A lackey now, I will be executioner !

THE QUEEN.

Say not you 'll strike the blow !

RUY BLAS.

Madame, if I refer
To what must be, my hard and adverse fate I blame !

[Pushing SALLUST towards the cabinet.
'T is said. My lord, go there and pray, in Heaven's name.

DON SALLUST.

This is assassination !

RUY BLAS.

Think you so ?



DON SALLUST (*looking anxiously round*).

Nowhere
A weapon to be seen! [*To RUY BLAS.*] A sword! It
is but fair!

RUY BLAS.

Marquis, you mock me! Am I then a gentleman?
A duel? Fie! fie! I'm but a servant. As such, can
I fight with you? I'm one of those you strike, you kill,
If so it pleases you; but now it is my will
To slay you for a *villain*, like a dog!

THE QUEEN.

For him

Oh, mercy! mercy!

RUY BLAS (*to THE QUEEN, seizing SALLUST*).

Madame, from this justice grim
I pray you turn, Angel for demon cease to plead!

THE QUEEN (*falling on her knees*).

Grace! mercy!

DON SALLUST (*calling out*).

Aid there! aid!

RUY BLAS (*raising the sword*).

Those cries no ears will heed.

DON SALLUST (*struggling with RUY BLAS*).

I die assassinated! Demon!

RUY BLAS (*pushing him into the cabinet*).

Punished! Yes!

[*They disappear into the cabinet, and the door closes on them.*]

THE QUEEN (*falling exhausted into a fauteuil*).

Heaven!

[*A pause, and then re-enter RUY BLAS, pale and unarmed.*

SCENE IV.

THE QUEEN, RUY BLAS. RUY BLAS *staggers a few paces towards THE QUEEN, who remains cold and impassive in the chair. He falls on his knees, and appears afraid to raise his eyes from the ground to her face.*

RUY BLAS (*in a deep and solemn voice*).

I must now tell — and neither more nor less —
The simple truth, dear madame. I will not approach
Your royal person nearer; nor will I encroach
Upon you farther than to beg you will believe
I am less guilty than I seem. Pray you receive
With mercy what I state. My soul is not so vile
As this curs'd treason shows. My love did me beguile
E'en to my ruin. Yes, my fault, I grant, was great;
But I have expiated it. It is too late
To say how much I loved you.

THE QUEEN.

Sir!

RUY BLAS.

Be not alarmed;

I go not near your Majesty, and am but charmed
Into this revelation point by point. To-day
I rushed about the town in madness and dismay,
Because such peril threatened. Frequently the eyes
Of passers-by looked on me with unfeigned surprise.
I am not truly vile! Once, near an hospital

Founded by you, I felt a hand upon me fall,
And gently dry the sweat-drops on my maddened brow!
It was a woman of the people! See me now!
I crave for pity! — My worn heart is broken!

THE QUEEN.

What

Seek you of me?

RUY BLAS.

Your pardon!

THE QUEEN.

Pardon! I could not

Forgive.

RUY BLAS.

Could not?

THE QUEEN.

No, never!

RUY BLAS.

Never!

[Starts up, seizes the phial on the table and drains it.]

Out then spark!

It is full time.

THE QUEEN (*rushing to him*).

What dost thou?

RUY BLAS (*putting back the empty phial*).

Nothing. 'T will be dark

Ere long. You curse me, and I bless you in return, —
That's all.

THE QUEEN (*wildly*).

Don Cæsar!

RUY BLAS.

Can I think that you now burn
With anger, and yet loved —

THE QUEEN.

What philter did you take?
Speak to me! Tell me! Cæsar! Cæsar! for the sake
Of her who loves and pardons you!

RUY BLAS.

Madame — alas!

Call me not by that name!

THE QUEEN (*throwing her arms round him*).

I pardon you, Ruy Blas,
But tell me what you've done? Speak! speak, I now
command!
It is not poison, that dread liquor? See! I stand
In horror of your answer!

RUY BLAS.

Yes, 't is poison; but
Joy is now radiant in me! 'T is no longer shut,
That portal of delight!

[*Holds THE QUEEN in his embrace, and looks up.*]

O Heaven! thou hast been
All merciful! The lackey now can bless the Queen
That she hath thus consoled a heart, long crucified,
That beat but for her love, and with her pity died!

THE QUEEN.

Poisoned! I then have killed you! Oh, I love you!
Yes!
Would I had pardoned sooner!

RUY BLAS (*sinking down*).

I should not the less
Have done the deed! — I could not live.
[*His voice becomes fainter.* THE QUEEN *supports him in*
her arms.

Farewell! — Oh fly
From here! — All will be secret! —

THE QUEEN.

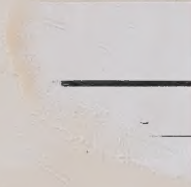
Ruy Blas!

RUY BLAS (*with a last effort*).

Thanks. — I die!



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